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Mitchel, J.

The Scripture doctrine of
the divinity of Our Lord

2. *John Doe*

THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF THE

Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ,

AND

OTHER SUBJECTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.

IN A SERIES OF SERMONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN MITCHEL,

MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION, NEWRY.

NEWRY:

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THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BELFAST

The History of the City of Belfast, from its first settlement in 1602, to the present time. In two volumes. The first volume contains the history of the city from its first settlement to the year 1700. The second volume contains the history of the city from the year 1700 to the present time. The history is written in a clear and concise style, and is accompanied by many interesting anecdotes and facts. The author is a native of Belfast, and has been a resident of the city for many years. He has collected a vast amount of material, and has written a history that is both accurate and interesting. The history is a valuable work, and is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of Belfast.

T. Mairs, Printer, Joy's Court, Belfast.

PREFACE.

THESE Discourses were not originally designed for the public eye. The first of them was preached with the hope of allaying, in some measure, that controversial spirit which has unhappily become so prevalent. That hope not having been realized, the succeeding Discourses, with the exception of the last, which was delivered before the General Synod of Ulster in the year 1823, were designed to put the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry in distinct possession of the writer's sentiments on some difficult and much disputed points of Christian doctrine. Regarding our English translation of the scriptures as generally accurate, he has not encumbered his pages with Greek criticism. It could be of no use to those who do not understand the language; and those who do, will consult the original for themselves. The Discourses were composed week after week, as they were preached; and they were sent to the press, at the request of the Congregation, just as they were delivered from the pulpit. The principal points treated of, being subjects of pure revelation, and on which we can have no information beyond what is supplied in scripture, it is unnecessary to apologise for having dealt so largely in the production of that incontrovertible authority. The Bible is the only true criterion of Christian doctrine. If the views exhibited in these Sermons

be found there, they will stand;—if not, the sooner they fall the better. They were thrown together for the use of those who have a right to know them. They are now made public, chiefly to defeat the designs of those who have discovered such a readiness to misrepresent them. This done, the writer commits them to their fate. They will, no doubt, be controverted—let them be so: the writer does not design to enter the lists of controversy; he trusts he knows how to employ his time to much better purpose. Those Christians who conscientiously entertain different views, he can sincerely respect and love;—nor should such difference be permitted to destroy, or lessen, on either side, the spirit of Christian meekness and benevolence. He has, it is true, impugned a doctrine held forth in the formularies of both the Established Churches of Britain, and professed by a majority of the church of which he is a member:—he has been, in some measure, impelled to this course by the controversial character of the times, not thinking that the doctrine in question has any solid foundation in scripture. But he should be sorry thereby to give offence to any of those churches, or of the Christian people connected with them. He has spoken of those churches with the respect and veneration which he feels. He regards the people of their communion, taken generally, as among the best Christians on earth. But none of these churches either are, or profess to be, beyond the reach of error; and it is scarcely to be doubted that the majority of their educated adherents entertain views of the scripture doctrine not very dissimilar to those laid down in the following discourses. The last of the series, addressed to an audience chiefly clerical, was designed to furnish, from the New Testament, the model of a Christian pastor; and to point out the principal subject matter, as well as the true motives and ends, of his ministrations. To that scripture model it has been the writer's desire, by the grace of God, to conform his own ministry, as regards Christian principle, public instruction, and general deportment in life.

And however he may have fallen short thereof in the discharge of his pastoral duties, the views of Christian instruction and ministerial conduct which he then submitted to his fathers and brethren, he conscientiously entertains, and humbly endeavours to practise still; nor can he willingly relinquish them, so long as he takes the New Testament for his guide. He determines, so long as God gives him ability and opportunity, to devote himself with increasing diligence to the work of the gospel ministry; and to know nothing as the ground of his own hope, to lay down nothing as the ground of hope to others, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He looks upon the Redeemer as the brightest display of the divine character in a visible form—as “God manifest in the flesh;” and he desires, with Howard, to have these words inscribed on his tomb,—“In Christ is my hope.”

The principal reasons for the preaching, and for the publication, of the following Discourses, will be found in the subjoined documents.

ADDRESS

*Of the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry to the
Rev. John Mitchel.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

WE, the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry, have heard, with approbation and with interest, the series of Discourses on doctrinal subjects, which you have been induced to deliver during the last two months. We are aware that the necessity you felt yourself under for entering on those subjects, originated in the extraordinary and unexpected proceedings of the General Synod of Ulster, at their last annual meeting; and we are farther aware, that designing persons, here and elsewhere, have since been busily employed in misrepresenting your principles, and endeavouring to excite dis-

affection to your ministry, with the obvious purpose of creating a division in our hitherto united and happy congregation.

Whilst we feel astonished that such unchristian measures have been resorted to for this purpose, we cannot forbear expressing our admiration of the candour and firmness with which you have stated and vindicated your religious sentiments, and the perfect liberality which you have uniformly expressed towards those who entertain different views.

We heartily approve of your determination in refusing to be called by any human denomination in religion, and in grounding your views of Christian doctrine exclusively on the Christian scriptures, unshackled by creeds or confessions drawn up in the words of fallible men.

Satisfied with the views of Christian doctrine which you have unfolded, we have respectfully to request, that you will give these Discourses to the public, for the purpose of vindicating your sentiments from misrepresentation, and refuting the calumnies so artfully circulated against you. We beg to assure you of our unshaken attachment and continued support; and pray that you may be long spared to us, as a faithful minister of the gospel of Christ.

Signed, in our name, and by our order,

ISAAC WILLIAM GLENNY,
SESSION CLERK.

March 2d, 1828.

REPLY.

To the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

You will accept my warmest thanks for the kind and Christian manner in which you have addressed me. The sentiments you have expressed are worthy of yourselves, and of the cause you have espoused. You know that, during my

ministry among you, I carefully abstained from controversial theology ;—but since the unlooked-for proceeding of the last Synod, to which you have alluded, there was a concurrence of circumstances rendering it necessary for me to depart from my usual course. Hints were thrown out, in conversation, of a want of candour in avowal among our ministers. I was rudely assailed by interrogatories on the subject, in the open streets. I was written to, requiring an explicit declaration of my religious sentiments. These impertinencies I might have overlooked, and despised, as they deserved. But I was at length informed, by a respectable elder of the congregation, that such rumours were spread abroad in reference to my doctrinal views, as would render it imperative on me to enter upon a special explication of them. I forthwith commenced that series of discourses, of which you have so kindly expressed your approbation. The favourable testimony of soberminded Christians, next to the approbation of God, and my own conscience, will contribute to shield me from the calumnies of designing men. Looking on the Bible as a divine revelation, it has ever been my wish to ground my faith on the holy scriptures alone ; and, therefore, in matters of faith, I shall call no man master, for one is my master, even Christ ;—nor shall I take up with any man's opinions, farther than as I may see them fairly grounded there. My religious views I humbly and sincerely desire to take from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and from such as I believe were commissioned of Heaven to write and speak “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” I, therefore, do refuse to be called by any human name whatsoever in religion. I agree in many things with Calvin—indeed, in all things which I deem essential to salvation ; yet I am not a *Calvinist*. I may agree in some less important points with Arius, yet I am not an *Arian*. I firmly believe all that the scriptures teach of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as three distinct persons ; and yet I reject the unscriptural denomination of *Trinitarian*, as that

term is usually understood. I as firmly believe, what Christ himself has taught me, that the Father is "the only true God;" and yet I equally repudiate the unscriptural denomination of *Unitarian*, as that term is usually understood. These, and such names, I regard as injurious to the interests of Christian truth and charity. Much misconception may grow out of them; much wilful misrepresentation may be built on them. But I trust, brethren, you will never permit your attention to be diverted from the truth of God, by the mere sound of the names of men. If there have been among you any misconception of my religious principles, I hope it has been removed;—and I doubt not, you possess as much sound sense, and Christian spirit, as will enable you to repel the poison of wilful misrepresentation, come from what quarter it may. I fondly re-echo your prayer, that our hitherto happy connexion may be long continued, for our mutual good. The Discourses which I have delivered during the last two months, though designed exclusively for your ear, are now given to the public, at your request, and for the purposes you have mentioned. Allow me to dedicate them, my beloved hearers, to you, in token of the respect and affection wherewith I am

Your faithful friend and pastor,

JOHN MITCHEL.

March 2d, 1828.

CONTENTS.

	Page
SERMON I.	
Christian Instruction in the Spirit of Meekness	1
SERMON II.	
On the Pre-Existence and Divinity of Christ	20
SERMON III.	
On the Mediation and Divinity of Christ.....	46
SERMON IV.	
The Father Almighty the only True God	73
SERMON V.	
The Son and Holy Ghost subordinate to the Father	105
SERMON VI.	
Holy Scripture its own best Interpreter.....	139
SERMON VII.	
The Sufficiency of Scripture as a Rule of Faith.....	178
SERMON VIII.	
The Scripture Terms of Christian Communion	208
SERMON IX.	
The Motives, Means, and End, of the Gospel Ministry.....	233

[THE following Discourses having been printed at a distance from the Author,
and hurried through the press, a few typographical errors have occurred,
which the reader will readily correct.]

SERMON I.

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION IN THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS.

2 TIMOTHY, ii. 24.

“The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

THE human mind is so constituted, as to leave room for a vast variety of character, sentiment, and opinion, among the children of men. Whether this variety may have arisen, as many think, from an innate and original difference in the constitution of different minds; or whether it be produced, as many others think, (in whose opinion I can more easily concur,) wholly, or chiefly, by an endless variety of circumstances in the early condition of different individuals, necessarily growing out of their peculiar education, society, and habits;—to whatever source it may

be traced, the fact cannot be disputed, that the characters of the human mind are as various as the features of the human countenance.

This being one of the arrangements of unerring wisdom, must no doubt be made to serve some wise and valuable purposes. But that which is in itself innocent and useful, and directly designed for good by the great Creator, is often, by the creature, perverted from its object, and rendered absolutely pernicious. It has been very much so in the case before us. Men have not only entertained different opinions on the same subject—seen the same object, as it were, with different eyes:—this, perhaps, would, in itself, have been no great evil; but they have also been wilful and wicked enough to make such differences the occasion of reproaching and slandering, of persecuting and destroying each other, and that often on points of comparatively minor importance.

That the passions should have been enlisted in the quarrel, among Heathens, is no more than might have been expected, where men were not under the holy guidance of Divine revelation. That human beings, in such circumstances, should have been proud and passionate, heady and high-minded, hateful and hating one another, would seem to belong to the degeneracy of our nature. But when a revelation of Divine mercy to offending man is handed down from the throne of Hea-

ven;—when the high bearer of that message presents himself in the character of the reconciling Mediator, and the Prince of Peace; and when the message itself is announced as the glad tidings of peace on earth and good-will towards men;—it might have been expected that, whatever differences of opinion might still remain among those who admitted this Divine revelation, the fierceness, at least, and the bitterness of human pride and passion would have been dismissed; that all those who thankfully received the overtures of Heaven's mercy, would at least cease to exercise mutual unkindness and cruelty;—that all those who were willing to be reconciled unto God through a Redeemer, would also be reconciled to one another; and that where differences of opinion on minor points, or doubtful points, should arise among them, they would at least, on such subjects, agree to differ in peace.

How wofully have such reasonable expectations been disappointed! Look back upon the annals of the Christian Church, and see, with sorrow, how much and how sorely the benevolent countenance of Christianity hath been disfigured by the virulence of controversy; and how often and how deeply her very spirit has been depressed, and seemingly extinguished, by the violence of persecution! Look abroad over the face of the Christian world, at the present day, and you behold men's minds soured and inflamed by the

angry debates of heated theologians, from one end of Christendom to another. Look at the state of Christian feeling in our own ill-fated country. Why, between one furious controversy and another, not only is Christian communion and fellowship broken up, or in danger of being so; not only are the blessed fruits of brotherly kindness and charity withered; but our heats and differences even go the length of interrupting in some measure the ordinary business of life—of disturbing the common courtesies of society!

So circumstanced, it is the duty of Christians to inquire what manner of spirit they are of, and to ascertain what course of conduct their holy religion prescribes. With this view I have made choice of the words of Paul to Timothy—"The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." I regard them as well suited to the occasion; and I bespeak your attention, whilst I endeavour to dilate on the important lessons they contain, and apply them to the circumstances in which we stand.

In the context, the Apostle cautions Timothy to avoid such questions as had a tendency to gender strife. Such questions were bandied about and discussed with harsh and unchristian vehemence then, as well as now. They often led, even in the Apostles' days, to the same sort

of unhappy consequences as they have since done, and are doing at the present time. They fomented divisions—they embittered the spirits of men—they “gendered strife.” The Apostles uniformly discountenanced these angry debates, and dissuaded Christians and Christian ministers from engaging in them.

The Apostle Paul here tells Timothy expressly, that “the servant of the Lord *must not strive.*” It was absolutely imperative upon him to stand clear of strife, to keep the spirit of contention wholly away from him. How, indeed, should such a spirit as this comport with the blessed spirit of the gospel of peace? What can there be in common between the “strife of tongues” on earth, and the mild voice of mercy descending from heaven? What more unbecoming—what more out of place—out of character, than fierce and fiery contention, in the professed servants of Him, who “would not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; who even when reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself unto him who judgeth in righteousness?”

The servant of this Lord therefore must not strive, but be gentle to all men. He must show, by the gentleness of his habitual deportment, that he is himself subject to the mild and commanding influence of that holy religion which he would recommend. In his intercourse with the world,

and with whomsoever he may come in contact, he must be careful to discover no unbecoming harshness, no unnecessary severity of manner; he must exhibit no trait of character unsuited to that man who professes to copy after the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The servant of this Lord, whilst he is gentle unto all men, must at the same time be "apt to teach;"—he must possess both a fitness, and a disposition, to impart useful instruction to those around him. This, of course, must be understood as belonging more immediately to the duty of the pastoral office; yet not so exclusively as to preclude from the exercise, or exempt from the obligation thereof, those who may have no claim to perform all the functions of that sacred office. On the contrary, we know that it is the bounden duty of all Christians, to exhort one another, to be ready, in their several spheres, and according to their several talents and opportunities to disseminate all around them a knowledge of Christian truth, and a sense of Christian duty.

This aptness to teach, occurring as it does in the enumeration of those gentle and benevolent qualities which the Apostle reckons so valuable in any servant of the Lord, naturally gives us the impression that the Apostle thought those persons the least apt to teach—least fit, and least given to communicate solid and important instruction, who were most deficient in gentleness—most apt to strive—most given to the heat, and

violence, and bitterness of contention. And this we all know, and feel to be the truth.

And whilst this gentle servant of a gentle Lord must feel the obligation of ministering to the wholesome instruction of others, he will at the same time feel the necessity for exercising "patience" in the discharge of his important duty. There were gainsayers and opposers of Christian truth from the beginning, and will probably be so to the end. But the servant of Christ must be patient of opposition and contradiction, after the example of his Master:—he must be patient of reproach, misrepresentation, and abuse; for he knows that his Master has set him the example. Christ had more perverseness and prejudice to encounter than any of us. Misrepresentation, reproach, and calumny were heaped upon him on all hands. He was more reviled, more defamed, than any man; but he was not to be overcome of evil—he overcame evil with good. He patiently and calmly instructed mankind, as they were able to bear it. And the patience, and the meekness, and the humility, and the benevolence of the Son of God, were like oil upon the waves of the ocean; the pride and the prejudice, the bigotry and turbulence of men subsided before them. And let the follower of Christ, who would show himself worthy of the name, humbly copy after the example of his Master's patience. Let him learn to cultivate

that spirit of Christian charity, which “believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” Let him not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. Let him “be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.”

Those who resolve to act upon different principles; those who put themselves forward in the attitude of an overbearing championship,—resolved to batter down, by main force, the strongholds of opposition; those who are determined to anathematize,—to consign to perdition, all who do not conform to their own views;—all such persons may make a noise in the world—they may fan the prejudices, and inflame the party feelings of men; but they will not do much for the cause of Christian truth, Christian peace, or Christian charity. No! whatever is to be done for the cause of Christ, let it be done in the spirit of Christ. Let it be done in the spirit of meekness, and gentleness, and Christian charity; from a sincere desire to promote the spiritual improvement and salvation of ignorant, sinful, perishing men. This is the only effectual way to overcome human prejudice, and to convey the gospel of peace with light and power to the heart. A meek and patient instruction in the principles of Christian truth and righteousness, is the scrip-

ture method of dealing with those who oppose themselves; and this has ever been found a much more effectual method to convince mankind of their errors than fire and fagot. In the teaching and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his inspired Apostles, we have neither precept nor example for destroying men's bodies, under the pretence of saving their souls; for injuring their temporal, in order to secure their spiritual interests. We have no instance of their treating men with reproach or violence—misrepresenting their principles, and casting out their names as evil, from a pretence of attaching them to the cause of God and of truth. Our Lord's invitation to erring, perishing men, was, "Come unto me, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And to those who declined his gracious invitation, the language of his reproach was no more than this—"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

And the Apostles of Christ closely followed his footsteps in this particular. In the discharge of the important duties belonging to their sacred office the Apostle Paul speaks of himself, and his colleagues in the apostleship, as "giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience,—by

pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

And now, my beloved brethren, if I have succeeded in my design of faithfully laying before you the leading principles by which Christians, and Christian Ministers, should be influenced and guided in their treatment of those who are opposed to them, or differ from them, in religious views, I trust I need not doubt your favourable reception of them, or your sincere desire to act upon them. They come recommended to you by the common feelings of your nature; by the high authority from which they emanate; by the precepts and the example of your Lord; and by the conviction of your own minds, that they will ever be found the most effectual in the production of good. And I cannot but observe, with high satisfaction, (I hope I may say so without flattery,) that, as a Christian society, you are so generally influenced by these mild and tolerant principles. I should be sorry, indeed, ever to see any of you indifferent as to the principles either of your Christian faith, or of your Christian practice; for "it is a good thing to be zealously affected always in a good cause:" but our zeal ought to be tempered with Christian humility and discretion. It is the privilege and

duty of every man to be “fully persuaded in his own mind,” on all such subjects at least as admit of that full persuasion : but no man is thereby authorised to judge with harshness or severity of those who differ from him, but to judge this rather, that “no man lay a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” It is proper that we render to every man, that modestly asks it of us, “a reason of the hope that is in us,” as Christians : but this should ever be done with meekness, with reverence, with godly fear. We should carefully avoid those questions which have no other tendency than to gender strife. And if, at any time, we feel it our duty to take part in the discussion of theological questions of importance, or in conversations upon them, let us ever remember that, even here, “the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men ; apt to teach ; patient ; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

Whilst these principles should guide us in our general deportment as Christians, there are two special cases of importance to which, at present, we should feel it our duty to apply them.

The first of these to which I shall turn your attention, is the relation we stand in towards the great majority of the people of this island, who oppose themselves so strenuously to our religious

views. As a church, and as individuals, we claim the right of private judgment. We exercise the privilege of entertaining such sentiments on the subjects of Christian faith, worship, and morals, as we find in the Holy Scriptures. We are accustomed to regard the Bible as the sole standard in these matters. And, taking our measures by this infallible rule, we cannot but be impressed with the persuasion that in the Church of Rome there have been, and still are, as many errors in doctrine, and as much unauthorised observance in worship, as could well be combined with the profession of Christianity. But we form part of the same community with them; and the question is—how are we to carry ourselves towards them, so as most likely to become instrumental in removing their prejudices, in enlightening their minds, and in leading them to what we regard as a purer profession of the faith in Christ, and a more spiritual worship and service of the living God? Not, surely, by any means partaking of the nature of persecution, reproach, or violence:—not, surely, by misrepresentation and calumny, and casting out their names as evil. All these things have been brought much more into operation than they should have been; and they have all failed, as might have been expected, and as it was right they should, of producing any generally favourable results. Pains and penalties, and civil disabilities, have long been tried, and tried in vain; and no length of

time will ever cause such means to succeed. There is a barrier raised against them in the very pride and obstinacy of human nature, which they will never be able to surmount, and which, in truth, they do not deserve to be able to surmount. There has been some woful impolicy in the civil treatment of these people, which has all along stood in the way of their intellectual and spiritual advancement; and which, until it be removed, must ever defeat the rational hope of any such advancement. "That which now letteth, will let, until it be taken out of the way." What that impolicy is, and how it should be remedied, I do not take upon me to point out; nor would this be either the time or place for doing so, were I capable of it. One thing is clear, that, so far as relates to ourselves, it is our unquestionable duty, in all things, to manifest towards that people the mild and gentle spirit of the religion we profess. So long as they feel themselves aliens in their native land—so long as they are treated with scorn, and contumely, and exclusion, so long will they naturally view us, and every thing connected with us, with a jaundiced eye: so long will they continue to receive our overtures with jealousy, and to regard all our plans for their improvement with aversion and fear. It behoves those, therefore, who are really anxious for the spiritual good of that people to remove those obstacles as far as possible out of the way.

and to try with them, at length, the Scripture method of a mild, gentle, patient instruction. Let us be ready, in our several places, to lend our aid, upon general principles, and without giving offence, towards the extension of education, especially as connected with Scripture. Let us assist in putting the blessed book of God into the hands of all who are willing to receive it. Above all, let us be careful, through the grace of God, to exemplify in our own carriage, the spirit of that book: and when we are favoured with a fitting opportunity of Christian conversation with those who thus differ from us, let it be embraced in the spirit of brotherly kindness; remembering that “the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men.” If this course were more generally pursued, God would countenance and prosper the means employed in accordance with his will; and in due season we should witness a blessed change.

There is one other subject to which I would gladly apply the principles laid down in the text—I mean the differences of opinion which sometimes unhappily disturb the harmony of those who agree in acknowledging the Bible as the sole standard of faith. Where men are not allowed to exercise their own understandings in searching the Scriptures for themselves, a certain uniformity may be produced by the influence of human authority: but it may be the uniformity

of error, as readily as of truth. Where men judge for themselves in religion, it may be expected, that, whilst referring to the same Divine standard, they will be generally agreed in the fundamental and essential points; they may yet have many shades of difference touching matters of a more doubtful description, or which have been but partially revealed. Thus, whilst all regard the Gospel of Christ as a message of mercy to fallen man, questions have arisen, whether that heavenly message be conditional or unconditional; whether it was designed for mankind at large, or confined to comparatively few; and whether the bearer of this message of mercy to our race be God, or man, or both, or neither. And these questions, and such as these, have from time to time become the subjects of the most keen, virulent, and rancorous controversy; in the midst of which, the better part of Christianity, its spirit of love and charity, has been lost and forgotten; for the very end of the commandment, the very design of the dispensation, is charity: "and now," saith the Apostle Paul, "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity."

The last question which I mentioned, touching the nature and dignity of our Divine Redeemer, a question, which in earlier ages of the Christian church, frequently led to scenes of most shame-

ful and unchristian strife, has again been made the subject of angry debate, and of fierce defiance, in our own land. And, at the present time, persons professing our common Christianity, professing to believe that there is "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all," are ready to consign each other to public odium in this life, perhaps to endless perdition in the next, under those unscriptural denominations of Trinitarians, and Unitarians, Arians, and Socinians, and such other appellations, which it would have been well for the Christian world if they had never been heard of.

If it had been thought a matter essential to the faith and salvation of men, that the nature and dignity of that Divine Redeemer should be apprehended alike by all, it would doubtless have been revealed in such a manner as to leave no room for honest inquirers to doubt, or to differ, on the subject. That honest inquirers, that men of the highest talents, of the first education, of the most undoubted sincerity and piety, have taken different views of this matter, is, to my mind, a clear indication that it has not been very distinctly revealed, and that it cannot be of such vital importance as it is sometimes represented. Will a criminal, under sentence of death, waste his time in disputing about the rank and office of the person who is authorised to bring him a reprieve, before he can make up his mind to accept of his

sovereign's pardon? An act of grace has been passed in the courts of Heaven, to rescue sinful man from merited perdition :—these glad tidings have been conveyed to us by a messenger from above :—be that messenger who he may, it is plain the message comes to us with the highest divine authority ; and shall we turn away from that joyful, that life-giving message, and consume our time, our talents, and our temper, in vain and fruitless disputation about the dignity of the messenger ?

This latter, is, no doubt, a very proper subject, on which to exercise our understanding with a becoming humility, so far as it has pleased God to reveal it ; but if, in such exercise of our understanding, we arrive at different conclusions, as hath been often the case, might we not in the spirit of the gospel agree to differ in peace ? What right have we positively to pronounce, that those who do not think with us on such a point shall without doubt perish everlastingly ? Would it not be more becoming, would it not be more Christian-like, to bear with each other in matters of this description ; and mutually to “ seek after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another ? ” Why should we not endeavour, in all such cases, to apply the mild and healing measures recommended by the Apostles, in similar cases, to the primitive Christians ? “ Receive ye one another, but not to doubtful disputations. Receive ye one another,

as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God." Whilst every one may be fully persuaded in his own mind, even where there may be considerable differences of opinion on minor points, I see nothing to hinder Christians from preserving the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

In the uncomfortable feeling which present heats and differences have diffused over the public mind, let us, my beloved brethren, see to it, that, as the disciples of the meek and compassionate Jesus, we preserve the kind and conciliating spirit of the gospel towards those who in some things may differ from us. Let us avoid, as much as possible, inflaming our own minds, or the minds of others, by the angry discussion of controverted and doubtful topics. In conversation with our fellow Christians on the doctrines of our common faith, let us religiously abstain from any misrepresentation of the principles of others; from assuming the dictatorial or exclusive tone; and from ever indulging in the language of passion, or of defiance, on the sacred subjects of religion. Let us remember, that though God can make "the wrath of man to praise him," yet "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let us beware that we do not suffer the deadly poison of an unruly tongue, or the turbulence of an ungoverned temper, to interpose between the alienated spirit of sinful man, and the free grace of a reconciled

God. Let us beware that we do not contribute to raise a cloud, composed of the turbid elements of human prejudice, and human passion, between a world lying in wickedness, and the sunshine of Heaven's mercy. Let us be careful that "nothing be done among us through strife or vain glory; but let each esteem other better than themselves." Calling ourselves the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us habitually bear in mind that the "servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance." And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON THE PRE-EXISTENCE AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

JOHN xvii. 5.

“ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

THERE are certain broad and general principles, in which, it is presumed, we all concur. I trust we are all agreed, for example, in regarding the Bible—the sacred revelation of the Divine will to man—as the only true and unerring rule of faith and practice. “ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” And so long as we possess these infallible Oracles of God, we should beware of confounding them with the decrees, and decisions, and commandments of fallible men.

I trust, too, we are farther agreed, as to the right of private judgment ; the right of consulting the Holy Scriptures for ourselves, in all matters connected with faith and practice. No man is vested by Scripture with any authority to judge for another in these things ; but every man is there expressly required to “ search ” “ to try,” “ to prove all things,” by that unerring rule ; and to be “ fully persuaded in his own mind.”

These were the acknowledged rights of the primitive Christians: they are the rights of Christians still. And the allegiance which we owe to Christ, as the King, Head, and Lawgiver, of the Church, absolutely forbids our surrender of these rights. We should bow down to no human authority in religion ; we should call no man master here. It is not only our right, but it is our bounden duty, a sacred duty which we owe to our Divine Master and to ourselves, to assert and maintain the valuable privileges he has conferred upon us ; and to “ stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, that we be not entangled with any yoke of human bondage.” It is the unquestionable duty of all Christian people, just as much as of their pastors, to become intimately acquainted with their Bibles ; to bring every thing that is introduced, or attempted to be introduced, into religion, to the test of Scripture : diligently to compare all doctrines, though delivered by the greatest autho-

rity upon earth, with what they find in the written word of God ; and to receive, or reject them, as they may be found to agree with, or differ from, what we all profess to regard as the sole standard of faith.

These are the foundation principles of Protestantism. These are the principles which our forefathers nobly asserted at the era of the Reformation—many of them with their lives, and the loss of every thing dear to them in this world. These are the principles which all Protestants profess to hold, however some may fall short of them in practice. These are the principles with which I humbly propose entering on a detailed exhibition of what appears to me, after long and serious examination, accompanied by the most humble and earnest prayer, to be the Scripture doctrine of the Divinity of the Son of God. And upon the same principles I have a right to expect from you a patient, attentive, and impartial hearing.

To those who have read the New Testament with becoming attention, it must appear evident that it was not thought necessary to be very explicit in disclosing the precise dignity of that Divine Saviour which it reveals. Possibly because the allwise Author of this book saw that the human faculties were too limited to receive or comprehend a disclosure of this nature ; or, because he knew that a distinct apprehension

thereof, on the part of man, was not necessary to human salvation. This, as I take it, is one of those high subjects, in which we are here permitted to “see in part, and to know but in part.” Yet none of us can doubt that enough has been disclosed upon it to answer the wise and good purposes of the Almighty:—nor has any one the least reason to call for farther or more particular information, unless he can show his claim to it. “Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those which are plainly revealed, to us and to our children.”

No one will say that the office of Christ Jesus our Lord as Mediator between God and men, and the glad news of salvation which he brings to a world lying in wickedness, and the redemption which he hath purchased for his followers, and the grounds on which we may expect to be partakers therein—no one will say that these things have not been laid before us in the Gospel with all plainness and simplicity. And the knowledge of these things, it is presumed, is of much more importance to creatures in our condition, than the most correct and enlarged conceptions of the nature and dignity of that heaven-descended Mediator—conceptions which may be altogether above us.

It is no doubt a most pious exercise of our minds to endeavour to understand this latter subject—so far as it hath pleased God to reveal

it in his holy word. This, however, is no subject on which to speculate; nor should we, in such a case, attempt to be "wise above that which is written." But if we are truly humble and honest in consulting that which is written, and as truly earnest in seeking the guidance of the spirit of truth in our inquiries, it is to be hoped we shall be preserved from dangerous error; and my humble conviction is, that, in such circumstances, an involuntary mistake on either side of such a subject as this will endanger no man's salvation.

The very fact, that the wisest and best of men have entertained different views of this subject, after the most sincere and careful examination of the Scriptures, will satisfy a candid mind that this is not a fit subject on which to dogmatize. And although we should not for a moment suppose that God will suffer any sincere and humble inquirer to fall into error, in those great doctrines which are essential to salvation, yet we have no right to expect a similar security in reference to those points that may not be of such vital importance.

It is recorded, that Jesus, on one occasion, asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?"

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."

Various opinions touching the nature and dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ have, more or less, obtained among his followers from that day to the present; and may be expected to continue, so long as we remain in this state of imperfection. The minds of men, for some time past, have been, and are just now, more than usually occupied upon this high and interesting subject: and though it be avowedly encompassed with considerable difficulty, in any view of it, there is scarce any subject on which mankind are more apt to form rash and hasty conclusions, or more ready to misrepresent and vilify those who differ from them. I am aware that there is much of this bad disposition manifested around us of late; and the obvious necessity of preventing any misconception with respect to myself, and any evils that might result therefrom, has induced me (somewhat reluctantly, I confess,) to take up this very solemn subject; and to lay before you, as distinctly as I can, whatever definite views thereof I have been enabled to form from the word of God. I cannot but feel the subject towards which I am thus drawn, to be a high and an awful one. I trust my God will enable me to approach it with becoming reverence, and with-

hold me from offering you any other views of it than those which are exhibited in the Holy Scriptures. I can offer no claim to infallibility. I am not beyond the reach of error. But I can have no conceivable motive for wilfully misleading you, or myself, on such a subject. On the contrary, I am presented with the weightiest of all motives for believing and teaching the simple truth as it is in Jesus.

I cannot be so presumptuous as to expect that the sentiments which I shall honestly disclose should have any weight with you, merely because they are mine. Put me, therefore, altogether out of the question: for of what value are the opinions of any man, or of all mankind together, on such a topic? To the law and to the testimony, therefore,—to the sacred revelation of God, we refer you at once; and we say, if we speak not according thereto, it must be because the light of truth is not in us. Laying aside, as we ought, all merely human authority, as of no value whatever in determining this question, let us turn, with all reverence and humility of heart, to that holy book which speaketh to us with the voice and authority of God; earnestly beseeching him that, for Christ's sake, he may be pleased to open our understandings, and enable us all, with humble and teachable minds, to receive and embrace what he himself hath taught us. And now, O God, “send forth thy

light and thy truth, and let them, and them only, be our guide."

Poor erring man, when indulging his own speculations, is sadly prone to extremes; and there is perhaps no doctrine of the Christian revelation on which this woful propensity has discovered itself more fatally, than on that which is before us—the nature and dignity of the Redeemer. While many good Christians have not hesitated to identify him in all things with the Father Almighty, and to regard him, in the strictest sense, as the most high, underived, self-existent, and eternal God—others have not scrupled to regard him as a mere prophet, vested indeed with extraordinary powers, but who had no existence previous to his birth in Judea; and thus reduce him at once to the common level of humanity. Between these extremes (neither of which appears to me consonant to Scripture,) there is a wide field, and room enough whereon to rest the faith of the gospel; and, as in the case of most extremes, the truth may be found to lie between.

The most unscriptural, and, as I take it, the most erroneous view of this subject, is that which denies the pre-existence of our Divine Saviour, and sets him nearly, if not altogether, on the level of the prophets and other inspired men. This view of Christ appears to me so utterly repugnant to the tenor of God's word, that

I feel the deepest anxiety, so far as in me lies, to prevent the possibility of its being entertained by any of you.

I shall, therefore, with the blessing of God, set myself, in the first place, to lay before you the Scripture view of the Divinity of the Son of God, embracing the pre-existence, the high dignity, the transcendent glory, of that Divine Redeemer, through whom, and through whom alone, we all look up to God for pardon, for grace, and salvation. In executing this task, I can take no course so satisfactory to you, and to myself, as by turning your attention at once to those portions of the word of God which speak plainly and definitely on this subject.

Although the passages to which I shall refer you for information on this part of my subject will be found to throw light in various directions, yet I wish you especially to regard them, at present, as they bear on the superior dignity and high exaltation of the Saviour.

For method's sake, I propose to classify my quotations under three distinct heads:—as they regard his pre-existent state, and the glory he had with the Father before the foundation of the world:—as they show forth the dignity of his nature, even during the period of his voluntary obscuration upon earth:—and as they speak of his still higher glory in his present state of exaltation at the right hand of God.

I shall first bring together a few scriptures

which plainly declare to us the pre-existence of that Saviour, and the glory he possessed with the Father, not only before his appearance on earth, in character of a Mediator, but before the foundations of this world were laid.

In the history of the ministry of Christ, given by the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, I do not find one passage directly bearing upon the point now under consideration. But we find the evangelist John commencing his gospel with these remarkable words—on which I shall have occasion to comment on another part of the subject.—“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. *The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made.*” And in the 10th verse of the same chapter—“He was in the world, *and the world was made by him*, and the world knew him not.” At the 29th verse of the same chapter, John the Baptist, “seeing Jesus coming unto him, saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me; *for he was before me.*”

Hear now a few of his own express declarations on this subject. In the 3d chapter of John’s gospel, he tells us, “no man hath ascended up to heaven, *but he that came down from heaven*, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.” John vi. 38, he says, “*for I came down from heaven*,

not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." John vi. 51—"I am the living bread which *came down from heaven.*"—62d verse, "what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up *where he was before?*" In the 8th chapter of John's gospel, at the 22d verse, we find the following declarations of Christ on the same subject. Addressing himself to the Jews, he saith, "ye are from beneath; *I am from above:* ye are of this world; *I am not of this world.*"—42d verse, "Jesus said unto them, if God were your father, ye would love me, *for I proceeded forth and came from God;* neither came I of myself, *but he sent me.*"—58th verse, "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, *before Abraham was, I am.*" In the 16th chapter of John's gospel, at the 28th verse, our Lord saith, "*I came forth from the Father,* and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." And as the close of his ministry on earth drew near, he offered up to the Father that most heavenly and delightful prayer, which is preserved in the 17th chapter of John's gospel, of which the text forms a part:—"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory *which I had with thee before the world was.*" And at the 24th verse of the same, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; *for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*"

In close conformity with these declarations of the Redeemer, are those which we find through the writings of his inspired Apostles. Take the few following as examples.

The Apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, xv. 47, tells us, that “the first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord *from heaven.*” In his second epistle to the Corinthians, viii. 9, he saith, “ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” In that to the Ephesians, iii. 9, he tells us, that “God *created all things by Jesus Christ.*” In that to the Colossians, i. 13, he tells us, that “the Father hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; *who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*”

The same Apostle begins his epistle to the Hebrews with this lofty description of the high nature, dignity, and office, of our Divine Saviour: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake, in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; whom he hath appointed *heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*"

Now, these few, but plain and express declarations from the lips of Christ himself, and those of his inspired Apostles, might be sufficient to convince all mankind, at least they fully convince me, of the pre-existent dignity of our Divine Saviour, and of the high blessedness and glory which he had with the Father before he appeared on earth; nay, before this earth, or its inhabitants had any being. I shall now bring together a few passages of holy scripture, which must give us high conceptions of the superior dignity of the Redeemer, even during the period of his voluntary obscuration and abasement.

I forbear, under this head, to notice the miraculous works of our Lord Jesus Christ in proof of his divinity. I am aware that some have laid much stress upon the miracles of Christ in this point of view, but I cannot concur with them.

They do indeed clearly demonstrate the divine mission and office of the Redeemer: but I should no more think of proving his divine nature by his miraculous works, than I would think of setting about, by the same rule, to demonstrate the divinity of Moses, and the prophets under the old dispensation, or that of the apostles of Christ under the new. But there are considerations connected with Christ's ministry on earth, which to me have always presented much stronger demonstrations of his divine character and office.—From among which I select the following.

According to the testimony of Christ himself, there had not, from among those born of women, arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist; and yet we hear John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 11.) bearing this witness to the great superiority of the Messiah: “I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but *he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost.*” And in the 16th of the same, the evangelist tells us, that “when Jesus was baptised of John, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” And in the 41st and 42d verses of the same chapter, speaking of his own preaching, and of his own wisdom, we hear Christ declar-

ing that a "*greater than Jonas, a greater than Solomon, is here.*"

In Mark's gospel, ii. 10, our Lord Jesus asserts of himself, that "*the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.*" And in the 28th of the same, that the "*Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*"

The evangelist John tells us, (i. 14,) that "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." He tells us farther, in the 18th of the same chapter, that "no man hath seen God at any time; *the only begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In the same gospel, (iii. 30.) we hear John the Baptist, in speaking of the Messiah, whose forerunner he was, giving this description of his superior dignity:—"He must increase, but I must decrease. *He that cometh from above is above all.* He that is of the earth is earthy, and speaketh of the earth: he that *cometh from heaven is above all.* And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the spirit *by measure unto him.* The Father loveth the Son, and hath *given all things into his hand.* He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth

not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." In the same gospel (xi. 25.) Jesus saith unto Martha, "*I am the resurrection and the life* : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die : believest thou this? She saith unto him, yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, *the Son of God*, which should come into the world." In the 14th chapter of the same, at the 3d verse, "Jesus saith unto Thomas, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And in the beginning of the 17th chapter of the same gospel, (from which my text is taken,) "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee : *as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

When his ministry on earth was coming to a close, and he about to be received up into glory, he came and spake unto his disciples, saying, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you; *and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*"

In close correspondence with these views of the Redeemer's dignity exhibited on earth, and in language proceeding from his own lips, is the express declaration of the apostle Peter, in his second general epistle, i. 16—"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, but were *eye-witnesses of his majesty*:" (alluding to his having been permitted to behold the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration;) "*for he received from God the Father honour and glory*, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory—*this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. And this voice which came from heaven we heard," adds the apostle, "when we were with him in the holy mount." Let us close this part of the subject with that sublime representation of the Apostle Paul, (1 Tim. iii. 16.) "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

To complete the scripture view of the divinity of the Son of God our Saviour, it remains to submit to you a few of those passages which speak most plainly of the great glory of the Re-

deemer in his state of triumph and transcendant exaltation at the right hand of God.

In the 5th chapter of John's gospel, we read these words of our Lord himself—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For *as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*"

In the epistle to the Ephesians, i. 15, the apostle says—"whereupon I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him *at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that*

which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In the epistle to the Philippians, ii. 8, we read thus. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath *highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

In the first epistle of Peter, i. 18, the apostle thus expresseth himself. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who *by him* do believe in God, *that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."*

In the same epistle, iii. 21, the writer gives a still plainer description of the great glory of our exalted Redeemer. "The like figure whereunto

even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is *gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God—angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.*”

I shall close my quotations on this subject by one or two of those sublime representations given by him who was permitted, in vision, to behold the transcendant glory of our exalted Head. (Rev. v. 6.) “And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints;—and they sung a new song, saying, *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof:—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.* And I beheld, and I heard the voice of

many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb* that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb*, for ever and ever." (Rev. vii. 9.) "And after this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb*."

I trust, brethren, you are not fatigued by the length to which I have thought it necessary to carry these quotations from holy scripture. They are surely much more important, much more to the purpose, and calculated to bring home a stronger conviction to the mind, than any thing else I could have uttered.

I have now finished what seemed to me indispensable on this first part of my subject, in bringing before your minds, in one view, some of

those plain and pointed representations of the word of God, which never yet permitted me to entertain a doubt of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ;—embracing his pre-existent state, and the blessedness and glory which he enjoyed in the bosom of the Father before the foundation of the world ;—embracing his sojourn upon earth in the form of a servant, and the glimpses of superior dignity and glory which broke through the cloud of his lowest humiliation ; and extending to that state of inconceivable splendour and majesty, of additional, of still higher bliss and glory, where he now sitteth, clothed in universal dominion, on the right hand of God. And I have purposely submitted these scripture authorities to you, without the intermixture of a single comment or reflection of mine, lest they might be thereby prevented from producing their full, free, and uninterrupted impression upon your minds.

There is not, I trust, and am very willing to believe, a single Socinian among you ; one individual who professes to believe in the Messiah, and yet would venture, after the consideration of these things, to reduce him to the level of a mortal man. If there were any truth or reality in this view of the person of Christ—if there were any foundation whatever for such a faith, would it be likely, would it be possible, that such unequivocal representations of his superior dignity and glory, as those which I have submitted to

you, should be every where met with in the volume of inspiration? Can any man entertain for a moment the blasphemous thought, that the book of God, that the Spirit of God should thus trifle with us, or mislead us? No, no, brethren; we cannot but believe in the true divinity of that only begotten Son of God, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world to be the Saviour of sinners.

If we consult the New Testament throughout; if we allow the Christian volume, as a whole, to produce its own natural effect upon our minds, and do not take up with a few insulated passages as the basis of our creed, the indelible impression, I am persuaded, will be, that the beloved Son of God, who had being and blessedness in the bosom of the Father before all worlds, and who was made partaker of the divine glory in the creation of all things, when the condition of man required it, voluntarily descended from that high dignity, took on him our lowly nature, and was found in fashion as a man, that he might mediate between our fallen family and an offended God, in the joint characters of Prophet, Priest, and King; and that when he had accomplished the great work of man's redemption from sin and death, he resumed his native place in the bosom of the Father, there for ever to enjoy the glorious fruits of his high, his unparalleled, his merciful achievement.

In this discourse I have confined myself to that exhibition of our Lord's divinity, which, as it appears to me, every candid inquirer will find in the plain declarations of scripture: and those portions of holy writ which I have already submitted to your consideration can scarcely fail, I should think, in fixing a deep conviction of this interesting truth upon every heart.

There are those to be met with (few or none I believe in this part of the world,) who profess to think otherwise upon the subject; who are accustomed to regard Jesus of Nazareth in no higher character than that of humanity, on a footing with Moses, and the other prophets of the Most High. This view of the nature of Christ must rest, as I think, upon a misconception of some few insulated texts of Scripture; and, to my mind, appears altogether repugnant to the general scope and bearing of divine revelation. Yet, whilst I cannot but look upon it as a great and important error, I shall not presume to sit in judgment on those who profess to hold it. I shall not presume to say, that they must on that account perish everlastingly; or that they cannot reap advantage from the mediation of that Saviour, in whom they profess to believe, but whose character they rate so low. For I cannot for a moment suppose, that our interest in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, should thus be suspended upon the mere point of such ignorant and imperfect

creatures as we are, forming an absolutely correct judgment as to the precise nature and dignity of the Redeemer. As, however, I conceive this low view of the character of Christ to be grossly erroneous and unscriptural, I shall do my utmost, through the grace of God, and by the aid of his holy word, to prevent its reception. For I have not yet done with this part of my subject.

In those direct testimonies to the divinity of Christ contained in the several portions of Scripture which have already been brought under review, there are incidental but striking notices of various important facts, from which the same doctrine may be fairly and conclusively drawn. Among these you will recollect the following facts of this description :—his existence in glory before the foundation of the world :—his being clothed with the power of God in the creation of all things :—his promise of being present with his church and servants, wherever they are met in his name, to the end of the world :—his appointment to the high office of Mediator between God and men; including his spotless example, his atonement for the sins of the world, his continued advocacy and intercession at the right hand of God, and his appointment as judge of the quick and the dead. These, and some other facts, plainly recorded in scripture, are, to my mind, among the most satisfactory testimonies to the superior dignity and divinity of the

Son of God. On these subjects I shall not, however, fatigue you and myself by enlarging at present; but reserve them, God willing, for our serious consideration in a succeeding discourse. In the mean time, may God bless the preaching of his word, and give us a due understanding of all things necessary to our salvation, and to his holy name, through Christ our Lord, be everlasting praise. Amen.

SERMON III.

ON THE MEDIATION AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

IN addressing you, last Lord's day, on the interesting subject of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, I took occasion to observe—that, among those extremes into which mankind are so prone to fall upon points of controverted theology, I could not help regarding that opinion respecting the nature of Christ as most unscriptural and erroneous, which refuses to admit his pre-existent state; which denies, of course, the glory he had with the Father before the world was; and indeed brings him down without scruple to the level of humanity—clothed, however, with such supernatural powers as were necessary to fulfil the office of a prophet. These are the

distinguishing features of that erroneous system of belief respecting the character of Christ, which is commonly known under the denomination of Socinianism. And this system of faith has always appeared, to my mind, not only contradictory to the plainest declarations of sacred scripture, but subversive of those foundation facts and principles, on which, as I take it, the hopes of sinners—the hopes of pardon and salvation, are made to rest.

I therefore took care, in my last discourse, to produce such plain and unequivocal representations of scripture on this subject—representations made by Christ himself, and by his inspired Apostles, as I trust have laid the foundation of a very different faith in your minds; and, through the grace of God, shall never permit you or me to entertain a doubt of the divinity of that merciful Saviour, who is the way, and the truth, and the life, and through whom alone we look to the living God for pardon, acceptance, and salvation.

But independent of the direct and overwhelming testimony to the divinity of the Redeemer, furnished in such rich abundance throughout the sacred volume, there are distinct views every where exhibited of the high and glorious office which the Son of God sustains, as Mediator between God and man, and of the important functions which he has performed, and is still per-

forming, in fulfilment of that office, which, though they do not come to us in the form of direct and explicit announcements of his divinity, do yet bear most forcibly upon the subject; and have so filled my mind with impressions of his exalted dignity and of his divine nature, as to leave there no room, no possibility of admittance, for any lower views of the character of Christ. And these offices and functions of our Divine Saviour, I propose, with God's blessing, to make the subject of our present consideration, and to offer them as direct evidences of his divinity; and, whilst so occupied, may God vouchsafe us the guidance of his Holy Spirit.

I do not know whether I may be able fully to explain myself upon these points; or to put you in distinct possession of those views which I entertain of the offices and functions of the Redeemer—views which I believe to be founded on scripture, and which to me have ever been so clearly indicative of his divinity. My aim, however, is, to do so with all the plainness and precision in my power; and I trust my God will employ me as an instrument in setting forth that only which is according to his will; and at the same time open your hearts to receive the truth in the love of it.

In a former discourse, you will recollect, that, among other things, I submitted to you the scrip-

ture authorities for regarding Christ Jesus as that great and glorious being by whom God created the worlds; for God created all things by Jesus Christ; and without him was not any thing made that was made. Now, this in itself seems to me the completest proof of his pre-existent dignity and glory: and how such a function should be consistent with the belief of his mere humanity, and especially with the belief that he is not yet two thousand years in being, must be left to be shown by those who can entertain such belief. With me such ideas have no place.

But though there be, to my mind, and I hope to yours, satisfactory evidence of the divinity of Christ, resulting from a contemplation of his high office as employed in the creation of the world; yet this is not the subject on which I mean at present particularly to insist. There is another office which the Son of God sustains, and in which we are all much more nearly and deeply interested, from which the strongest testimonies to the superior dignity and glory of his nature may be easily and clearly deduced:—I mean his gracious and most merciful office of Mediator between an offended God and a fallen world. In the fulfilment of this blessed office, there are several distinct and most important functions which the holy scriptures plainly represent him as performing; and which, as it ap-

pears to my mind, could in no wise have been performed by mortal man—indeed, by any but a being far exalted above men and angels in the glory of his nature.

The high functions to which I refer, as included in the mediation of Christ, and as furnishing strong testimony to the divinity of his nature, are those which we find exhibited in scripture under the several designations of Saviour and Redeemer of sinners—advocate and intercessor at the right hand of God—anointed King and head of the church—and ordained Judge of the quick and the dead. The very mention of any one of these interesting offices completely shuts out from my mind the notion of his simple humanity; and, independent of the consideration of his pre-existent excellence, invests him, in my apprehension, with a degree of perfection, of dignity, and of glory, that I cannot but look up to as Divine.

Before entering, however, on the consideration of these several functions of our exalted Mediator, it will be proper to contemplate, as distinctly as we can, by the light of divine revelation, the distressed and melancholy condition of humanity, which appears to have produced the necessity for that high mediation which the gospel discloses.

We all believe, on the best authority, that “God made man in his own image,” which

image, the Scriptures inform us, consisted in the possession of “knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness :”—but we all believe, on the same authority, that man did not long retain this blessed impress, in its original purity and plainness. Almost in the first page of his eventful history we read of an occurrence, the calamitous consequences of which are still before our eyes, and will, no doubt, continue deeply to affect our race, so long as this world lasts. Man, an accountable, and then a perfect creature in his kind, early violated a plain and positive command of his Maker ; and, by that one act of wilful disobedience, entailed a dire calamity on himself and his posterity, to the end of time.

What the precise amount of that calamity, as it affects the entire race, we may not be able to comprehend in all its circumstances ;—especially as the scripture information has not been very particular, very copious, or explicit, on the subject. I doubt not it has been overrated by some, underrated by others. But I think it is generally admitted among Christians—at least whether admitted or not, I think it is taught in the scriptures with sufficient clearness—that, by the fall, man defaced the image, and forfeited the favour of God ; that, by the fall, he lost his innocence, and with it the hope of immortality ; and that, by the fall, he subjected himself and his race, throughout all generations, to a de-

plorable state of spiritual degradation, misery, and death.

Although the scriptures have not afforded that minute and circumstantial information on this subject, which we, in our vain and foolish curiosity, might wish for; neither have they left us wholly in the dark about it. We learn from the Old Testament, that the human family were, from this cause, immediately dismissed from their place and condition of primitive bliss—that they and theirs were thenceforward subjected to toil, and pain, and sickness, and death—that they were sent forth as wretched pilgrims, upon a wide world of want, and sin, and sorrow; but not without some hope, however obscurely communicated, of a gracious interposition, that would at length rescue them from the spiritual thralldom in which they were involved.

And in close correspondence therewith, we learn, from the New Testament, that “in Adam all die;”—that the sentence of death pronounced upon him, “dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,” has literally passed upon us all. For we read there that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”—that “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is

the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift : for the judgment was by one to condemnation ; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one ; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here, then, we get at the root of the evil : here we learn the original universal malady of human nature :—and here also (thanks be to God, through Christ,) we discover the cure.

I do not mean to teach you, for I do not think these passages teach, that the descendants of Adam are subjected to any *punishment*, in the strict sense of that term, for the sin of their progenitor : much less that they should be *thereby* exposed to the pains of hell for ever :—for the scriptures do not teach a doctrine so obviously at

variance with the justice and goodness of God. Punishment necessarily implies actual, or at least intentional guilt—voluntary, personal transgression, of which we all, surely, have as much as may keep us from looking back to the guilt of Adam for the ground of our individual condemnation. The absolute doctrine of scripture on this subject is—that “the son shall not perish for the iniquity of the father;” that “the soul which sinneth, *it* shall die;” and that every man shall be judged and dealt with “according to his works,”—according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.

Nevertheless, from the scripture account of the transaction, it seems plain to me, that by the fall of Adam we have all sustained a spiritual loss; that we inherit what may be termed a degraded nature; and that we have been eventually brought down to that woful condition of sin, and misery, and mortality, in which we find ourselves.

I am aware there are those who do not concur in these views; who not only reject the notion of guilt imputed, where there is no voluntary actual transgression; (wherein I think they agree with Scripture,) but who profess also to believe that man is just now such as he came at first from the hand of his Maker; (wherein I think they are utterly at variance with Scripture.) But do they believe those plain declarations of the divine word, which tell us,—that “there is not a just

man who liveth on the earth, and sinneth not"—that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"—that all, therefore, "are concluded under sin," and stand justly exposed to the sentence and condemnation of a broken law? Give credence to these facts, and account for them as you may: admit this to be the actual condition of mankind; (and I do not see on what grounds, either of Scripture or experience, it can be denied,) admit that all are in this calamitous condition; that all have really fallen under the sentence of death and condemnation; and then, whether the scripture account of the origin of this common calamity be admitted or not, there remains the necessary alternative—either that the awful sentence of the divine law shall be executed on the sinner to the uttermost; or, that God, of his infinite grace and mercy, shall extend pardon and salvation to the sinner, in such a way as may be consistent with his own unalterable holiness, and justice, goodness, and truth.

This latter is that which constitutes the gracious, the glorious discovery of the gospel of Christ to sinful man. There we are favoured with the glad news of the high mediation which is established, and of the merciful interposition which hath been made, for the recovery and salvation of a lost world. There we read, that, in this dispensation of heaven's mercy to a fallen

race, "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There we read, that in "the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," (them that were under the condemnation of the law,) "that we might receive the adoption of sons"—that we might be restored to the forfeited favour of our Father in heaven.

It would be folly to waste time in contending with those who can be presumptuous enough to question the wisdom of this divine arrangement; who profess to think that God might have extended pardon and salvation to penitent sinners, without the interposition of a mediator. Whether he might, or might not do so, is not for us to determine. That he has not thought proper to do so, might be enough for us; for we may be assured that all God's doings are done in the most perfect wisdom. Wherefore dare, in any case, to bring our wisdom in competition with the wisdom of God!—especially when we know, by experience, that the system of mediation disclosed in the gospel is perfectly analagous to the general constitution and course of the divine government. But even if this were not so, or that we did not know it to be so, might it not be sufficient for us to find such arrangement plainly recorded in the gospel? "If we receive the witness of men," saith the apostle John, "the

witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Now, the first admission of this divine record into my mind, the very conception it gives me of the high mediation which it discloses, puts it out of my power to regard the Mediator as belonging to the fallen family of man; and leads me to look upon him as next in dignity and glory to the great Father of all. And, more especially, when I proceed to consider the several distinct and most important functions which are made to devolve upon him in that capacity, as pointed out by the several offices and designations to which I before alluded.

Thus, the Son of God is every where in scripture denominated "our Saviour," in whom we have redemption. This high designation is set forth in a great variety of such expressions as the following. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall *save* his people from their sins." "The son of man is come to seek and to *save*

that which is lost." "We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour of the world*." "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour of the world*." "Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a *Saviour*, to give repentance and remission of sins." "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and *redemption*."

But wherein does this salvation, this redemption that is in Christ, consist? Some have seemed willing to confine his office as a Saviour to his perfect instruction as a prophet; his announcement of the Divine placability and mercy towards our degenerate race; and his offer of pardon and restoration to all penitent sinners—regarding his death upon the cross as no farther connected with the salvation of man, than the death of a martyr or witness to the truth. Had this been the whole of Christ's office as a Saviour, then indeed I should not have attempted to draw from it an evidence of his divinity; because there is obviously nothing in all this, that might not have been done, and for any thing I can see to the contrary, done as well by a mere man, properly commissioned.

But look into the sacred volume; and you will every where find the office of the Saviour, and the redemption that is in him, set forth in a point of view of much higher import indeed.

It is not denied that the office of a prophet, of a heavenly instructor, does truly belong to Christ; but to him also belongs, as truly, the office of a priest, literally fulfilled by offering himself on the altar of the cross for the redemption of sinners: and to that voluntary offering is constantly attributed an importance and an efficacy, to which his death, considered as that of a mere martyr, could have laid no claim. The shedding of his blood, the laying down of his life, is uniformly represented as that which, by the Divine appointment, has not only ratified but effected the redemption of the world.

Thus we read, among many other similar declarations, that “Christ was *once offered to bear the sins of many* ;” that “he is the *propitiation for our sins* ;” that “we are sanctified through *the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* ;” that by that “*one offering* he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ;” that he “hath appeared once in the end of the world, to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself* ;” that he “*shed his blood for the remission of sin* ;” that “in him we have *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins* ;” that “Christ *once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us to God ;” and that “God hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, (that is, a sin-offering for us,) that we might be made the

righteousness of God in him.”—I need not multiply quotations on this subject; for the New Testament is half composed of them.

I have often exhibited before your minds this most important view of the Redeemer's death, and of the redemption thereby secured; and there is nothing in scripture which more effectually settles my conviction of his divinity. For whilst “no man could redeem his brother, or offer unto God a ransom for him,” this weighty and momentous task devolved on the Beloved of the Father. And it should ever fill our hearts with a deep sense of the unspeakable value of the soul's redemption, to recollect that it was accomplished through the voluntary sufferings, and death, of a being of such transcendant excellence and glory.

Brethren, you will recollect that whilst I have uniformly taught you the doctrine of atonement for sin, by the death of Christ upon the cross, as constituting, in my estimation, the most prominent and important feature of his high mediation, I have ever carefully guarded against what I take to be a very unscriptural, however prevailing, view of the subject—I mean, that of regarding the atonement effected by the Redeemer's death, in the light of an *exact and full equivalent* for human transgression—an equivalent, which the Father of all could not in strict justice refuse to accept. This is, perhaps, too

common a sentiment on the subject—to me it appears to have no foundation in scripture.

I admit, that among the various forms of expression employed by the sacred writers to set forth the redemption by Christ, the following may be met with:—"he gave himself a *ransom* for all;" "he hath *purchased* the church with his blood;" and some others of similar import. But a mind accustomed to look at the general scope and bearing of the gospel, and especially at the accounts of the mediation and atonement of the Redeemer, will have no difficulty in understanding such expressions in their true and legitimate sense—will have no difficulty in guarding against that narrow and rigid interpretation of such expressions, which some have not been ashamed to give them.

But, suppose we were to understand them according to this confined interpretation, look at the inevitable consequence. They necessarily remove and destroy all sense of obligation, in this case, to the great Father of all; and surely it cannot be a just or scriptural view of the subject, which has any such tendency. Suppose one person to discharge a pecuniary debt for another, there is great benevolence in the deed; but it is plain that the whole of the obligation belongs to the person who has discharged, and no part of it to the person who has received, this debt. Just so, if we were led by a few insulated, and ill-understood

expressions, to look upon the atonement by the death of Christ in the light of an exact and perfect equivalent, which the Father could not but in justice accept of, we might, indeed, lay the foundation of supreme gratitude to the Son, but we should leave no room for the exercise of grace and mercy on the Father's part—we should present the Father only in the attitude of stern, unrelenting, inexorable justice—we should, I fear, take away all ground of obligation, and gratitude, and love, to him whom the scriptures uniformly represent as the original source and foundation of all good.

And I appeal to the feelings and to the candour of those who may have honestly and conscientiously entertained this view of the subject, whether it has had no tendency to exhibit the Son of God to their minds, in a character, in a point of view, more amiable, engaging, lovely, and benevolent, than the Father Almighty himself? I make this appeal from my own experience; for I well remember the time, when this view of the subject remained impressed by education, and hereditary faith, upon my own mind, and when upon that mind it *had* the tendency, and actually produced the effect which I have endeavoured to describe.

But look upon the doctrine of the atonement, as held up to view in the light of scripture—look upon the free grace of the Father Almighty, as

the source whence the inestimable gift of a Saviour originally flows—look upon the sufferings and death of that Saviour, as the medium appointed of the Father, through which to convey to his fallen children the incalculable blessings of the pardon of sin, of restoration to his favour, and of life everlasting, and, whilst this has no tendency whatsoever to lessen our obligations to that divine Saviour, who, for a season, laid aside his inconceivable glory, took upon him the form of a servant, and voluntarily submitted to humiliation, and an ignominious death, for our redemption, it yet exhibits the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in his true character of paternal benevolence, and preserves inviolate the primary ground of obligation, “gratitude, and praise, unto *him* to whom all glory is ultimately due. Then we can say, with something like truth and consistency, “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *he loved us*, and sent his dear Son to be the propitiation of our sins.” Then we can say, with something like truth and consistency—“*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to this living hope.*”

You will also recollect, brethren, that whilst I have uniformly, and, I will say it, sincerely and earnestly, taught you the great doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ, as what the scrip-

tures have ever led me to look upon in the light of the prime and most important result of his office, as Mediator between God and men, I have never yet attempted to explain to you *in what manner* this propitious cause has produced its blessed effect; or *how* the laying down of the life of Christ should be the ransom of ours. This I have not attempted to explain; and why? Because the scriptures have left this unexplained; and I have always thought it both presumptuous, and somewhat criminal, on a point of this kind especially, to go beyond the explanations of unerring wisdom. It is enough for me to be taught in scripture, that "Christ Jesus the righteous is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world;" and that "his blood cleanseth from all sin;" and I shall not be over anxious to be made acquainted with the nature of the process by which this invaluable object is effected. Give me the result, and my ignorance of the process will do me no harm. The probability is, I could not at all understand it. And although I could, if I find on searching the scriptures, that this knowledge is withheld from me, I shall no more think of disputing or of doubting the fact, on that account, than I should think of disputing or doubting the fact of my own existence, or of the union of my soul and body; though all I can be said to know about either of them is, that it is a fact. Christianity is a religion of facts, rather

than of explanations—of facts whereon to rest our faith, rather than explanations whereon to exercise our reason. And, on the subject of the redemption that is in Christ, the most cheering and important facts may be disclosed, whilst all explanation of them is withheld. That which is disclosed, is the revelation—that which is withheld, is the mystery; and to attempt explaining the mystery, is only “darkening counsel by words without knowledge.” Let us be thankful for what we are allowed to see and know—let us learn to treat with reverence that which is withheld from us.

I have been led, by the great importance of the subject, into such a lengthened review of that part of Christ’s mediatorial character, wherein he has fulfilled the office of a Saviour—of a Redeemer—and, especially, of his death upon the cross, as a sacrifice for sin—that I do not deem it necessary to my present purpose to go into detail upon the several other high offices of our Mediator, which I enumerated in the outset;—his offices of King and Head of the Church universal; of Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of God; and of ordained Judge of the quick and of the dead. Any one of these, did time permit, and were there occasion for it, might be shown to afford equal testimonies to the divinity of his nature, with that which we have just contemplated at some length.

How should it be supposed that a being so circumscribed and limited as man, could sustain the character of King and Head of the Church universal? or be with his ministers, and “in the midst of his servants, wherever they have met together in his name,” till the end of time?

How should it be supposed that a being belonging to the humble family of man, should be so highly exalted as to be placed in pre-eminent glory on the right hand of God; and having access immediately to the ear of the Almighty, perform the high office of Advocate and Intercessor for our fallen race?

Above all, how is it to be supposed that a being of such scanty knowledge as man, should be set upon the tribunal of the Most High, and ordained to decide the final and everlasting condition of all mankind?

Such appointments as these, on the supposition of his mere humanity, to me would be utterly inconceivable. But admit the divinity of Christ—believe him to be “the image of the invisible God,” “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person;”—possessed of all the communicable attributes of Deity—all the excellencies, dignities, and glories which the Son of God can possibly derive from the Father of the universe;—admit this, and the difficulties I have mentioned vanish at once.

It is, I trust, unnecessary to dwell farther on

these topics. But let me request it of you to reflect again upon the solid proof of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, furnished by his principal, and to us most deeply interesting office of Redeemer, or Saviour of sinners. If you truly believe, as the scriptures instruct you, that the Son of God “offered himself a sacrifice for the sin of the world;” and that by that one offering, he hath made atonement for sin, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified—if you truly believe these things, you can have no doubt of the divinity of Christ: for who among men, who among the sons of the mighty, who but the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” should be thought sufficient for these things? And, on the other hand, if you truly believe in the scripture view of the divinity of the Saviour, as the beloved Son of God, who had glory with the Father before the foundation of the world—if you believe him to be, in truth, that dignified and glorious being which the scriptures represent him, you cannot but conclude that his errand here below was of high and momentous import; that his death upon the cross must have done, for the redemption of fallen man, that which was altogether beyond the reach of men and angels to effect.

These great gospel doctrines of the divinity of Christ, and of his propitiation for sin, reflect mutual light and testimony on each other. As

the vast value of the work proves the high dignity of the agent, so the divinity of the agent bears witness to the dignity of his work. If either of them be true, they are both true. And he that can doubt either of them, after reading his Bible with attention, must have a mind constituted very differently from mine.

Before I part with this topic,—I mean the atonement, or propitiation, effected by the death of Christ,—there is a point of view in which I would have you regard it; (though this may come again, and with more propriety, under review on another branch of our subject;) there is, I say, a view of the death of Christ, which may be new to some of you, and had not always a place in my own mind, but which has latterly given me, and, if I can put you in distinct possession of it, will, I doubt not, impart to you also not only a more intelligible, but a much higher and more interesting idea of the doctrine of the atonement, than can properly belong to either of the extreme systems—the Athanasian and Socinian creeds:—the first of which, properly understood, must lead to very humble sentiments of the propitiation effected by the death of Christ; and such an idea is scarcely, if at all, admitted by the latter. It is worthy of observation, that these extremes, which appear to diverge so widely, do yet approach so near, as almost to meet, on the subject we have been considering—

the nature and dignity of Christ. Differing in almost all things else, they nearly agree in this,—in regarding Christ Jesus as a perfect man, united to, and actuated by, the supreme God.

Dismissing the Socinian system, of which I believe the doctrine of atonement forms no part, let us bring into comparison the Redeemer's death as exhibited by the Athanasian scheme, and the same most propitious event as seen in that light, which seems to me the light of scripture.

According to both views, the Redeemer possesses a divine and a human nature; divine, as the Son of God—human, as the Son of man. Now Athanasians generally represent the death of the Redeemer as the death only of the man Christ Jesus, from whom the Godhead was for the time withdrawn. No reflecting persons of that creed ever imagine, or affirm, that the living God suffered, or died, or was buried—although some have ventured to use the awful expressions—a suffering God—a crucified God. But the general sentiment of the sect undoubtedly is, that the suffering of death was confined to the humanity of Christ. Whereas, no such distinction touching the passion of Christ appears to me to be made in scripture. When I read that “Christ suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God,” the impression is naturally made upon my mind, and I see

nothing in scripture to remove that impression, that Christ suffered for sin, not only in his human, but also in his divine nature, (always understanding his divinity, as the scripture teaches me, in a subordinate sense); that Christ suffered as the "Son of God," as well as the "Son of man." In a word, that he suffered in his entire nature and character: and to this view of the subject his own words appear directly to lead us, when he says, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again;" which words do not seem at all to suit the character of mere humanity.

Now, which of these views is calculated to give us the highest sentiments of the sacrifice and of the death of Christ, as well as of the benefits to be derived therefrom? Both represent God as dwelling in Christ: both represent God as withdrawing from him in the awful hour of his passion on the cross. But with the one, this departure of the Godhead leaves Christ crucified a mere man; with the other, Christ crucified is still the beloved, the dignified, the glorious Son of the living God: and yet Athanasians will tell you that the doctrine of atonement can form no part of any creed but their own. Don't believe them. I submit these observations to your candid judgment, and shall not pursue this topic farther at present.

The general subject which I proposed to myself in this series of discourses, was to exhibit to

you what I believe to be the scripture doctrine of the divinity of Christ. I have now submitted those views of the subject, which forbid me, and I trust, will forbid you, to embrace that one extreme and erroneous doctrine, or any thing approaching to it, which is known under the name of the Socinian system;—a system which seems miserably defective in several of the essential doctrines of Christianity, and certainly is opposed, so far as I can judge, to the general bearing of holy scripture.

It remains that we henceforward turn to the examination of the other and opposite extreme, which is properly termed the Athanasian system;—a system whose error consists not so much in defect, as in redundancy. It may be safer, it may be better, to believe too much, than to believe too little. But it is safest and best of all, to believe what the Spirit of God has taught in the scriptures, without addition or diminution.

It shall be my object, therefore, with God's help, to overthrow whatever appears to me erroneous on the one side, by the same simple but powerful instrument, which I trust has gone successfully to overturn the error of the other—the word of God—the keen and powerful “sword of the spirit,” which, like that at the gate of Paradise, if I be enabled to wield it aright, will “turn every way” for the defence of truth, and

the demolition of error. And with those who look to the word of God alone, as the rule of their faith, I do not despair, in this case, of equal success. But we shall defer entering on this part of the subject till the next Lord's day. In the mean time, may the living God give us understanding according to his word, and to his great name, through Christ our Lord, be the praise. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE FATHER ALMIGHTY THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

JOHN xvii. 3.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

IN the preceding discourses I attempted to give you the scripture view of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to show you that the character and dignity of the Son of God have been greatly underrated, in that system of religious faith known under the name of Socinianism. How far I have succeeded in that attempt, I shall refer to your judgment; and if you are guided in the formation of that judgment by the only legitimate rule, you will probably be led to the same conclusion with myself—that the system I have named has no foundation in holy scripture.

Having delivered what appeared necessary on

that side of the question, we now come to the other and opposite extreme of doctrine on this subject—an extreme, which is most correctly termed the Athanasian system; a system, which, if I do not altogether mistake the scope and teaching of holy scripture, has greatly overrated the character and dignity of the Son of God, high as that character and dignity are there confessedly made to stand.

And in entering on this portion of my subject, I am aware that I may have a great deal of strong, but honest, prejudice to encounter. I do not use the term in any invidious or offensive sense—in any sense, in which it will not, more or less, apply to all mankind. We know that the principles of our faith, the articles of our creed, whatever they may be, whether right or wrong, are generally imparted to us at a period of life when it is utterly impossible we should be able to judge, for ourselves, of their error, or of their truth. And if we never come thus to judge of them, by an honest and impartial comparison with the legitimate rule, humbly seeking on that comparison the guidance of the Spirit of God, we may possess what, in courtesy, may be termed an hereditary faith; but whether that faith be true, or whether it be false, it is, in such circumstances, nothing better than a compound of credulity and prejudice. I shall not suppose this to be the case with anything like a majority of

you ; I wish it be not so with the majority of mankind.

These observations, which all of you can understand, and in which most of you, I dare say, will agree, are with me the fruit of personal experience. With me religion was long a matter of hereditary prejudice, and would have been so on any system : but it so happened, that I was brought up with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms among my hands. I was early taught to reverence all their decisions as of equal authority with my Bible. And I well remember the time when, on growing up, I first ventured, in conversation with my own honoured father, to hint that these were only the works of fallible men, I received from him such a look of utter astonishment, and such an earnest remonstrance, as contributed to clench my prejudices, and check my inquiries, for many years after. And though I have since, in some degree, and not without a long struggle, thrown off the trammels of early prejudice, and think I have discovered, by the light of scripture, that those venerated standards to which I have alluded, are not without various errors, chiefly of a speculative kind ; yet, when I recollect the time and the circumstances in which they were produced, (a period when the human mind was but just emerging from the darkness of an old hereditary superstition,) I am only astonished that they shed in such purity the light of Christian

truth; and, with all their imperfections, I still reverence them as among the best of human productions;—but they will never again stand with me in the room of the Bible.

I am aware, too, that I have to contend, on this part of my subject, not merely with the honest prejudices which I have endeavoured to describe, but also with that which greatly serves to confirm those prejudices—the authority of high names—the names of some of the most respectable and venerable national churches in the Christian world. The Athanasian doctrine, which I am about to impugn as inconsistent with scripture, is held forth in the accredited standards both of the Church of Scotland and of the Church of England. I am satisfied, at the same time, that the Athanasian doctrine is far from acceptable to many of the clergy, and perhaps to a majority of the educated laity of both churches. But if that doctrine were perfectly acceptable to every individual connected with those churches, it would, to me, be no better authority for receiving it, than the universal consent of the Romish Church would be for believing the doctrine of purgatory, or transubstantiation. I cannot bow down to the authority of man in spiritual things, so long as I have before me the paramount authority of God. And I hope no Christian, no body of Christians, can be offended with me, merely because I feel it my duty

“to obey God, rather than men,” wherever their authority may come into competition one with the other.

And here, in order to avoid all unnecessary offence, or the suspicion of any intended offence whatsoever, I desire it to be distinctly understood, believed, and remembered, that, as I do not attach myself to any party denomination in this inquiry, and utterly refuse to be called by any human or party name—so it does not enter into my design to give offence to, much less to quarrel with any church, or with any individual of any church, holding sentiments on this point different from mine. On the contrary, I would very much and deeply regret giving just cause of offence to any Christian. I have a true regard for all sincere believers in Christ, however they may differ on some speculative points. I have long respected, and ever will respect, the feelings of an honest mind, which cannot look upon this subject in the same light with me. And, especially, I feel an indescribable tenderness for those among you, my dear brethren, who come under this description. That feeling, I confess it, has hitherto withheld me from giving you any uneasiness upon a point of opinion, which, on whatever side it stands, ought, in my humble judgment, to be ranked among the non-essentials; and which, whether a difference be, or be not, known to exist about it, should not

therefore be allowed, so long as there is an agreement in the main and essential points, to interrupt the kindest affection, or the most sacred fellowship among Christians.

You will give me credit for sincerity when I say, that I have been, as it were, driven into this disquisition by the circumstances of the times, rather than drawn thereto by my own inclination. If I had regarded my views of this subject as essentially necessary to salvation, it would have been most criminal in me to have withheld from you the most explicit declaration of them. But I have not yet regarded them in that light. I do not think that an honest, unprejudiced view of the subject, on either side, in the least endangers salvation. And therefore, though fully persuaded in my own mind, I am not so anxious to make converts to my view of this doctrine, or to procure a perfect uniformity of opinion among you on a point respecting which there never has been any such thing, though highly desirable, if attainable—I am not so anxious in this matter, as, I confess, I am to be made instrumental, in the hand of God, in cherishing among you, and among all, so far as the sphere of my influence may extend, the spirit of love and of a sound mind—the spirit of peace and charity—the spirit of mutual toleration and Christian forbearance. I feel most anxious to promote these things; for these

things are not only the distinguishing badges of your religious profession, but, as I take it, they are much more essential to Christian improvement, and human salvation, than mere uniformity of opinion on any speculative points whatever.

On the important question now before us, as there is nothing capable of throwing any light but the scriptures, it is my business to point your attention to that light, and to beseech you all to open your eyes upon whatever that blessed light plainly presents to your view; and to receive, not in the spirit of fear, but with all readiness of mind, and all thankfulness of heart, the gracious discoveries it makes.

In turning this blessed light upon the question before us, it is proper to state distinctly what the question is. I take it for granted, that all Christians agree, at least in terms, that there is but one living and true God—considered in the sense of an underived, supreme, eternal, and absolutely perfect spirit—the origin and source of all other beings—the “Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.”

The question then before us is—do the scriptures teach us to regard our Lord Jesus Christ as being this one living and eternal God? Or, to put it on a broader basis, do the scriptures teach us to look up to the Father alone as the supreme God?—or, to the Father, and the

Son, and the Holy Ghost, in three distinct persons, as constituting that one supreme God?

This last is the absolute decision of the Westminster divines, adopted by the Church of Scotland, when they affirm that “there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” It is also the absolute decision of the so called Athanasian creed, adopted in common by the Churches of England and of Rome, which affirms the “Catholic faith to be this, that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity;”—that the “Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal—the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal; and yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal;”—that “in this trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another;”—with many similar declarations.

Now when such decisions as these are given us on such a subject, even by the most venerated human authorities, and given too, as they are in both these instances, in the words of fallible men, and not in the language of scripture, it is unquestionably our bounden duty, before we adopt them as articles of faith, to see and be assured that they rest upon some solid scriptural foundation. If this doctrine were expressly

taught in holy scripture, we should reckon it our duty to bow to it with the profoundest reverence—however mysterious it might appear in our eyes. At the same time, having the holy scriptures before us, we should equally reckon it our duty to take especial care that we do not receive the inventions of men for the truths of God. If you come to the inquiry before us with the humble and unprejudiced determination to rest your faith only on the foundation of scripture, I do not despair of convincing you that the doctrine stated forms no part of the divine revelation.

And now, may the word of the living God, and the Spirit of the living God, be our guides, and equally prevent me from delivering, and you from receiving, any thing that is contrary to the truth of the Gospel!

For the sake of distinctness in conducting this inquiry, I mean to pursue the following arrangement, which I hope will be satisfactory to your minds, and will, I think, bring under review all that may be deemed necessary on the subject. In the first place, I mean to collect such scripture testimonies as clearly appear to represent the Father as the one supreme God. In the second place, I mean to collect such scripture testimonies as clearly appear to represent the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, as subordinate to the Father Almighty. And, in the third place,

I shall endeavour, by scripture authority, to reply to all the arguments attempted to be drawn from scripture, that appear of any weight in support of an opposite doctrine.

And here, brethren, I desire once again, that, throughout this inquiry, you may regard me as nothing more than the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and calling your attention to the word of God; and as the testimonies I am about to collect under the several heads shall be delivered to you in the unmixed, unadulterated language of scripture, I trust you will receive them with that reverence, with that implicit faith, which we owe to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

I commence by turning your attention at once to that portion of our blessed Saviour's intercessory prayer to the Father on behalf of his disciples, which I have prefixed to this discourse:—"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know *thee the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." All scripture should be heard with the utmost reverence, as given by inspiration of God; but that which has fallen immediately from the lips of our

divine Saviour, seems entitled to peculiar veneration. Is it possible for human ingenuity to pervert the language in which he has here expressed himself? Let his words be taken in the natural, legitimate sense; and you cannot but perceive and feel that he has here, in the plainest terms, declared the Father to be "the only true God;" and to be so, as distinguished from himself. And this declaration of our Lord, delivered thus in the most solemn manner, in the duty of prayer, appears to my mind to put a greater importance on this view of the subject, than perhaps any other passage in the whole compass of scripture. Because in these words he not only teaches distinctly who the supreme God is, but seems, in some measure, to rest upon a knowledge and belief of this truth, the inestimable gift of eternal life: "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Is any one here capable of conceiving the blasphemy, that he, "in whose lips there was no guile," did not in these words plainly teach the absolute truth? Sure this gracious instructor will not be thought by any here capable of misleading his disciples? But, whatever would go to establish the Athanasian doctrine, that any others are perfectly, and in all things, equal to the Father, would, at the same time seem directly to impugn the truth of this solemn declaration

of our Lord. If he himself, and the Holy Ghost, have an equal title to the Godhead with the Father, then, I ask you, in what sense would it be true that the "Father is the *only true God*?" I shall not dwell upon this: but leave you to think whether you can fairly draw any other conclusion from this solemn declaration of Christ, than one—that the Father Almighty is, what our Lord hath entitled him, "*the only true God*."

Let me next request you to look into the best sermon that ever yet was preached—I mean our Lord's sermon on the mount, recorded most fully in St. Matthew's gospel, 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters—and you must observe throughout, that there is a continual reference to "the Father," as the one supreme God, the origin and end of all. Especially you will not fail to observe, that in there prescribing to his followers a form of devotion, our Lord has expressly instructed them to address their prayers to their *Father in heaven*; nor has he any where else taught his disciples to offer up their prayers to any but the same holy and merciful Father, to whom he was accustomed to offer up his own. He does indeed elsewhere instruct them to pray the Father "in his name," as "Mediator between God and men;" and thus only have we reason to hope that our prayers will be heard and answered in mercy. Now, to my apprehension, these plain instructions of our Lord seem directly opposed

to those originating in human authority, which tell us, that we must “worship the Trinity in unity”—that we must worship God in three distinct persons, all the same in substance, all equal in power and glory. This phraseology is unknown to the New Testament, and must have originated elsewhere. Look attentively through the entire teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will not find any thing like it, any thing approaching to it, any thing that bears the least resemblance to it. In truth, if you are disposed, as I hope you are, to be guided by the plain instructions of Christ on this subject, you will be taught to offer up your prayers and your supreme adoration, through Christ Jesus, and in his name, to the Father of all, as “the only true God.”

Turn your attention now to the plain language of our Saviour, recorded in Matthew, xix. 16: “And behold, one came and said unto him, good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, why callest thou *me* good? There is none good *but one, that is God.*” Could any mind, except a mind accustomed to take its instructions from some other teacher, imagine that our Lord intended in these words to represent himself as the supreme God? or as on a footing of equality with the supreme God? On the contrary, it appears to me, and I think will to a plain unprejudiced mind, that he intended to convey a

meaning directly the reverse. If Christ were himself the supreme God, or equal to the supreme God, how should we account for the distinction so strongly and unequivocally marked in the words before us between *himself* and that *God*?

I know that this, and every thing of this kind, is attempted to be accounted for, by alledging that in all such cases our Lord is speaking only in his human nature. But is there any such distinction as this—any such account of this distinction to be met with anywhere in scripture? No such thing. It is a mere gratuitous assumption.—It is a human contrivance, to bolster up a human error. Divine truth stands in no need of it; and I shall have occasion, afterward, directly to disprove it by the testimony of Christ himself.

If Christ were the supreme God, who will dare to entertain the blasphemous thought, that he should, in any case, deny himself in this manner, without affording, at the same time, such an explanation as might lead us to understand him aright? The total absence of such explanation in the scriptures, and especially in the case before us, leaves to us the clear and certain conclusion as to our Lord's doctrine—that the infinitely good God is one; and that he himself is not that one God.

I might occupy your time by a multiplication of passages to be met with every where through-

out the teaching of Christ, which would necessarily lead us to the same conclusion—that the Father Almighty is the one supreme God. And although the authority of our Lord, on this or on any subject, ought to be paramount with us, yet it may be satisfactory to see that, on this subject, the teaching of his inspired Apostles is perfectly consonant to his own. Let us now attend to two or three passages of this description.

The very first sermons of these inspired men show, with sufficient plainness, the sentiments which they had been taught to entertain on the subject. Thus, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension of Christ to God's right hand, when the Holy Ghost was sent down upon his Apostles according to his own promise, and they were thus enabled to declare to all nations, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God; and when this miraculous preaching excited the doubt and amazement of some, and the mockery of others, "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said, ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God* among you by miracles and signs *which God did by him* in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: *him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have

crucified and slain: *whom God hath raised up*, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. This Jesus *hath God raised up*, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being *by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father* the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

And in the next chapter, when the lame man who sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple, was healed by Peter and John, and when the Apostles saw that the people were filled with amazement, Peter addressed them in these words, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, *hath glorified his Son Jesus*; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. And killed the Prince of life, *whom God hath raised from the dead*, whereof we are witnesses."

I shall not have time for comment on these passages, nor can I think it necessary. Let any one without prejudice read these two first sermons of the Apostles of Christ, and judge whether *they* appear to have known anything of the Athanasian doctrine; or whether *they* seem to have identified that blessed Saviour, whose

gospel they then preached, with the great God and Father of all, who gave him to be a propitiation for our sins, raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

The letters, as well as the sermons, of the inspired Apostles, are full of similar materials.

Look into the first epistle to the Corinthians, viii. 4, and the Apostle tells you that “there is *none other God but one*. For though there be that are *called Gods*, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are *Gods many, and Lords many*,) but to us there is *but one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit, there is not in every man that knowledge.” The Apostle is here obviously setting forth the Christian creed upon this very subject. He tells us plainly, not only that there is but one God, but also, and as plainly, that that one God is the Father. Let the doctrine of the Apostle, delivered here, be compared with that which is delivered in the Athanasian creed, and it will be seen that they are not only different, but directly contradictory. Doctrines so diametrically opposite cannot both be true—some one of them must be false; and I think you will have no difficulty in making your choice between St. Athanasius and St. Paul.

There is a passage somewhat similar in the

epistle to the Ephesians, at the beginning of the fourth chapter, upon which the same observation may be made, and from which the same conclusion may be drawn:—"I therefore beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *one God and Father of all*, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." If the Apostle, whilst declaring that there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father, had told the Ephesians, at the same time, that these three were one God, then indeed he would have taught the doctrine of the Athanasian creed. But he has said no such thing. On the contrary, his declaration that "*there is one God and Father of all, who is above all*," has effectually destroyed the equality, and taken away the very existence, of the Athanasian Trinity.

There is nothing more certain than that the New Testament holds forth to us plainly, and in many places, the doctrine of three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and this, any one who chooses may call a Trinity; but it is no where said that these three persons constitute one being, or one God. And where-

ever they are represented as *one*, the obvious meaning is—not that they are one in essence, not that they are the same in substance, not that they are absolutely equal in all things, as asserted by Trinitarians, but one in design, one in intention, one in affection—perfectly agreed about the great object and work of man's redemption, as will hereafter be made more fully to appear by parallel scripture authorities. And throughout, the supremacy of the God and Father of all is uniformly asserted and preserved.

I have already submitted to you a few of those scripture testimonies, selected from the teaching of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, which plainly appear to limit the character of supreme Deity to the Father Almighty; and, indeed, cannot fairly be understood in any other sense. Such of you as are intimately acquainted with scripture, must be sensible that the New Testament is full of such passages. And were I to go on regularly commenting on them, as they occur throughout the volume, I should extend this division of my subject to a very disproportionate length. But I deem it unnecessary to be so prolix. For the sake, however, of those who may not have attended particularly to the subject, I shall here bring together a few brief quotations from the gospels and epistles; wherein you will observe, that the name of God is employed and intended exclusively to designate

“the Father,” as distinguished from every other being; and I shall just leave them, without note or comment, to produce their own natural and proper effect on your minds.—Luke i. 31, “Thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the *Lord God* shall *give* unto him the throne of his father David.” Luke xi. 20, “But if I (said Christ,) *with the finger of God* cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of *God* is come upon you.” John i. 18, “No man *hath seen God at any time*; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” John i. 51, “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of *God* ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” John iii. 16, “For *God* so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For *God* sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John iii. 34, “He whom *God hath sent* speaketh the words of *God*: for *God* giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” John iv. 23, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the *Father* in spirit and in truth; for the *Father* seeketh such to worship him. *God* is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in

truth." John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath *God the Father* sealed." John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of *God*. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of *the Father*, cometh unto me. *Not that any man hath seen the Father*, save he which is of *God*; he hath seen the Father." John vii. 16, "Jesus answered them, and said, my doctrine is not *mine*, but *his* that sent me. If any man will do *his* will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of *God*, or whether I speak of *myself*." John viii. 40, 42, 54, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of *God*. If I honour *myself*, my honour is nothing; it is *my Father* that honoureth me, of whom ye say, that he is your *God*. If *God* were your Father, ye would love *me*; for I proceeded forth and came from *God*; neither came I of *myself*, but *he* sent me." John xi. 21, "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever *thou* wilt ask of *God*, *God* will give it *thee*." And at the 41st verse, on raising her brother Lazarus from the dead,

“Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, *Father*, I thank thee that *thou hast heard me*; and I knew that *thou hearest me always*; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe *that thou hast sent me*.” John xiii. 3, “Jesus knowing that the *Father had given all things into his hands*, and that he was come *from God*, and went to *God*.” John xiii. 31, “Jesus said, now is the Son of man glorified, and *God is glorified in him*. If *God be glorified in him*, *God shall also glorify him in himself*, and shall straightway glorify him.” John xiv. 1, “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe *in God*, believe *also in me*. In my *Father’s* house are many mansions.” John xvi. 27, “The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out *from God*. I came forth from the *Father*, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the *Father*.”

I have already shown you how distinctly the text declares this doctrine, and shall here only observe, that the whole of Christ’s prayer, of which it forms a part, the entire chapter in which it stands, furnishes insurmountable testimony to the same truth. After his resurrection, the following words of our Lord are recorded, (John xx. 17.) “I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I

ascend unto *my Father*, and *your Father*; to *my God*, and *your God*."

Thus, you have from the gospels a few out of many passages, wherein the term *God*, is exclusively appropriated to *the Father*. They are selected, chiefly, from the gospel of John, a book much relied on for the support of a different doctrine; and the only request I have to make of you with respect to them, is—to recollect that they are all delivered in the plain words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. In the corresponding passages, which I shall now add from the preaching and writing of the Apostles, I do not mean that any thing can be thereby added to the authority of Christ; but it will be satisfactory to see how perfectly their views accord with the doctrine of their great Master. Acts ii. 36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that *God* hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts iii. 22, 26, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the *Lórd your God* raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me. Unto you first, *God* having raised up *his Son Jesus*, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts v. 30, "*The God of our fathers* raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. *Him* hath *God* exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness

of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom *God hath given* to them that obey him." Acts vii. 55, "But he, (Stephen) being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of *God*, and *Jesus standing on the right hand of God*, and said, behold, I see the heavens opened, and the *Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*" Acts x. 38, 40, 42, "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power*; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil; for *God was with him. Him God raised up the third day*, and showed him openly. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of *God* to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts xx. 20, "I kept back nothing that was profitable; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward *God*, and faith toward our *Lord Jesus Christ.*" Romans i. 1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of *God*, concerning *his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints; grace to you, and peace, from *God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (This, you know, is Paul's usual salutation in all his epistles.) I thank my *God*, through Jesus Christ, for you all." Romans ii. 16, "In the

day when *God* shall judge the secrets of men *by Jesus Christ*, according to my gospel." Rom. v. 1, 10, 11, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace *with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to *God* by the *death of his Son*, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in *God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. vi. 11. 23, "Alive unto *God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. The gift of *God* is eternal life, through *Jesus Christ our Lord*." Rom. viii. 16, 34, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of *God*: and if children, then heirs—heirs of *God*, and joint heirs with *Christ*. It is *Christ* that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever *at the right hand of God*, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. x. 9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth *the Lord Jesus*, and shalt believe in thine heart that *God* hath raised *him* from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. xv. 5, "Now the *God of patience* and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to *Christ Jesus*; that ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify *God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Wherefore, receive ye one another, as *Christ* also received us, *to the glory of God*. The Apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with

these words—"To *God only wise*, be glory, *through Jesus Christ*, for ever. Amen."

I have here, brethren, given you a specimen of the apostolic use of the term *God*, in those passages where it seems exclusively appropriated to the *Father*, as you meet with it in the epistle to the Romans. And if I were, in a similar way, to conduct you through the remaining twenty-one books of the New Testament, I should be obliged to transcribe a considerable portion of the sacred volume, and to occupy more of your time than you may be disposed to allow me on this subject. I am persuaded you do not reckon it necessary. But let me earnestly recommend it to you to look into them attentively for yourselves; to search the scriptures whether these things be so; and you will be richly rewarded for your pains. You will find such a uniformity of phrase throughout, as will satisfy your minds that all the Apostles of Christ not only taught the same doctrine, but were under the immediate guidance of the same spirit.

The following quotations afford a very brief sample of what you will meet with in the other epistles. 1 Cor. iii. 22, "All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and *Christ is God's*." 1 Cor. xi. 3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the *head of Christ is God*." 1 Cor. xv. 24, "Then cometh the end,

when he shall deliver up the kingdom to *God, even the Father.*" 2 Cor. i. 3, "Blessed be *God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.*" Eph. i. 17, "*The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.*" Eph. iii. 9, "*God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*" Phil. i. 11, "The fruits of righteousness, which are *by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*" 1 Thes. i. 9, "Ye turned *to God, from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*" 1 Tim. ii. 5, "For there is *one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" 1 Tim. v. 21, "I charge thee before *God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.*" Heb. x. 7, "Then said I, lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) *to do thy will, O God.*" 1 Pet. i. 3, "Blessed be the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Jude, 4, "Denying *the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The book of Revelation contains many passages to our present purpose. I shall content myself, for the present, with merely reading you the title of it, and two or three of its first verses. "The Revelation of *Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.*—John, to the seven

churches which are in Asia: grace be unto you, and peace, *from him which is, and which was, and which is to come*; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and *from Jesus Christ*, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests *unto God and his Father*; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Brethren, you may well think it time I should release you and myself from the task of scripture quotation on this subject. But the subject is one of importance; and as it is a subject of pure revelation, on which nothing else can throw any light, so nothing can be offered on it so satisfactory, nothing can carry such conviction home to the mind, as the pure, unmixed word of God. This was one object I had in view—that I might show the doctrine I am supporting to be the truth of God, and not the device of man. Another object which I wish to promote, by going through this lengthened detail of scripture testimony, and by requesting it of you to go into a still more lengthened and particular examination thereof for yourselves, is—that you may all see and know, that the doctrine of my text—the doctrine that the Father is "the only true God"—is indeed the doctrine which *per-*

vades the Christian scriptures. The New Testament is full of it. If I have ceased quotation, it is not for want of materials. I might occupy you, for hours, with passages equally plain, convincing, and pertinent to the subject; but I deem it quite unnecessary.

I might branch out my subject into many other heads of testimony, all leading directly to the same conclusion. I might have collected, under several divisions, those declarations of Christ and his Apostles, which apply such high and peculiar titles to the Father, as serve to distinguish him from all other beings. I might have classed under one head those which entitle him “Lord of heaven and earth :”—under another, those which entitle him “the Highest, or Most High God :”—under another, those which entitle him “the invisible God, *whom no man hath seen, or can see :*”—“the living and true God :”—the God “who sitteth on the throne :”—“the Lord God Almighty.”—But all these I hope you will see and consider for yourselves. The scripture testimonies already produced, might be sufficient to convince any mind, not closed by prejudice, or an undue regard to human authority—any mind prepared to bow down before the authority of Christ and his inspired Apostles—that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great and glorious being to whom he addressed his prayers, is indeed “*the only true God.*”

To some of you, my beloved brethren, who have been accustomed to think otherwise, and may not have much exercised your minds on the subject, this doctrine may appear new and strange. But it is not new to the scriptures, nor would it have appeared so to you, if your minds had been fairly open to the teaching of inspiration—if you had taken your creed immediately from the word of God. It is a pity that any thing *there* should be new or strange to any among you. Be persuaded to consult the holy scriptures with increased diligence—with a deeper reverence, and with habitual and fervent prayer to God, that he may enable you to cast away from you the trammels of human authority,—to open your understandings to the truth, and to receive with meekness, as new-born babes, the sincere milk of his holy word.

I know, brethren, you may be told, and some of you may think, that the doctrine which invests the Father exclusively, with the title of “the only true God,” is derogatory to the dignity and glory which properly belong to the Son of God, and to the Holy Spirit of God. And you may hear this doctrine denounced in high declamatory phrase, as an antichristian heresy, which takes the crown of glory off the Redeemer’s head, and amounts to little less than a denial of Christ! But, just recollect, that the doctrine so denounced is not mine, but his that sent me. It is the doc-

trine of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It is the doctrine taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles. And, as you cannot think me wrong in embracing, or teaching, any doctrine which they have plainly taught,—as you cannot think it an error implicitly to follow their holy guidance, so I am sure *you*, at least, will acquit me of any deliberate intention of degrading—of lowering the dignity, or lessening the true glory—either of the beloved Son of the Father, that merciful Saviour who suffered for me, and for you, on the cross, or of that Holy Spirit of God, through whose sanctifying influence, we all hope to be prepared for an entrance into the blissful society above.

God forbid that my hand should ever be sacrilegiously lifted up, to obscure one ray of the glory which encircles those blessed spirits who are fulfilling the high designs of the Father’s mercy, for the recovery of a lost world. On the contrary, I hope I can honestly say, that I desire to “know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” I hope I shall ever “glory in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” I trust, I shall be enabled, by the Spirit of God, to devote myself, in sincerity and truth, to the ministry of his gospel, and the observance of his laws, so long as I live. And I shall cherish the hope, that hereafter I may be graciously received, through

his merits, into the blessed presence of my Father in heaven ; and there permitted to join with the countless throng of glorified spirits, even with those who may now sit in severest judgment on me, in singing that song of triumph and of glory which shall never cease,—“ Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever.”

That portion of our subject, which we are next to approach, will lead me to collect, and submit, to your judgment, those scripture testimonies which clearly appear to represent the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit of God, as subordinate to the Father Almighty. But I must relieve your attention for the present, and reserve these things, God willing, for your serious consideration on the next Lord's day. May God bless the preaching of his holy word, and guide us, by his Spirit, in every endeavour to become wiser and better, and to his name, through Christ our Lord, be the praise. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE SON AND HOLY GHOST SUBORDINATE TO
THE FATHER.

JOHN xiv. 28.—x. 29.

*“My Father is greater than I.”—“My Father is greater
than all.”*

THE object of my last discourse was, to show, from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his inspired Apostles, that the Father Almighty is the supreme and “only true God.” That I succeeded in that object, with those who entertain a due reverence for the scriptures, as the only legitimate rule of Christian faith, I cannot doubt; seeing the testimonies which I then produced, as vouchers for that doctrine, were no other than the testimonies of divine inspiration, delivered in the very words of divine inspiration.

And I am now prepared, by the same unerring testimony, furnished as it is in rich abundance, and the utmost plainness of language,

throughout the scriptures, to show you farther, as I proposed, that the Son of God, our Saviour, and the Spirit of God, our Sanctifier, however high in dignity and glory, and they are confessedly so, far beyond our comprehension, are, nevertheless, subordinate to the Father Almighty.

This may be regarded by some as a superfluous labour. If the supremacy of the Father be, as indeed it is, the doctrine of Scripture, it may be alleged, and with truth, that this doctrine clearly and necessarily implies the subordination of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. But as the Spirit of Truth, speaking in the scriptures, never really contradicts himself, but is always consistent and the same, it may, notwithstanding, richly reward our search to inquire, whether this subordination of all, to the Father Almighty, be not also the uniform doctrine of the sacred volume; and if this be found so, there is a mutual corroboration—each of these doctrines will clearly imply and prove the other.

Judging from the well-remembered feelings of my own heart, when my attention was first strongly turned on this subject, I am aware that those who have hitherto been accustomed to look up to the Son and the Holy Spirit as in all things equal to the Father, and as being, with him, component portions of the same eternal Godhead, will naturally regard any doctrine which falls short of this, as lowering the essen-

tial dignity and glory of those blessed spirits. A feeling of this kind in my own bosom, strengthened by education and early habit, long stood out against the reception of any other view, even on the testimony of scripture; for I constantly bent that testimony to my own purpose: but, backed though that feeling was by the stubborn aids of early habit, of first impressions, preconceived opinions, and most venerated associations, it at length gave way before the force and the majesty of Christian truth, as it stands in the Bible.

Some of you may imagine, that those who reject the doctrine of the Athanasian Trinity, have turned away from the scriptures, and are following the vain speculations of fallible men. But I can assure you, in the sincerity of truth, that the views I have adopted on this subject, have been the direct result of a course the very reverse;—that they have really arisen in my mind, and been long confirmed there, in consequence of reckoning it my duty to estimate as nothing the language and the decisions of all mortal men, and to bow down with implicit reverence before the unerring decisions of the word of God—this holy book, which I have long and diligently consulted—and, so long as understanding and conscience remain to me, am resolved to consult—as the sole and single standard of Christian faith.

That which first turned my attention strongly and anxiously on the interesting subject now before us, was reading and reflecting upon the account which our blessed Lord gave his disciples of the awful changes which shall be visible in the heavens and on the earth, before the coming of the day of judgment; and when the disciples asked him, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He distinctly replied, "of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven; *neither the Son, but the Father only.*" Here was the difficulty which first staggered me; and though I attempted to account for this difficulty, as Trinitarians generally do, by supposing that our Lord must here be understood as speaking only in his human nature—yet this salvo was still puzzling and unsatisfactory to my mind, especially as I could not recollect any such interpretation in scripture; and I resolved to seek information, where alone it is to be found.

I opened the word of God; I humbly besought him, for Christ's sake, to vouchsafe me the guidance of his Holy Spirit, through the interesting inquiry on which I then entered. I did so, humbly, and frequently, and fervently;—I did so, not only for my own sake, but also deeply sensible of my responsibility as a public teacher of Christianity. I read the New Testament regu-

larly through, in our English translation. I did so more than once, on this very question. I carefully consulted most of the difficult and controverted passages, in the original Greek. My inquiry was sincere; it was earnest; it was persevering. My prepossessions were strong, and stubborn, and unwilling to give way;—but they were at length shaken, and cast down, and subdued, by that mighty instrument—“the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart;”—and I, who till then was what might be called a nominal hereditary Trinitarian, was thenceforward no longer so. My reverence for the scripture would not permit me. And they who are now, what I till then had been, and are resolved to continue so, are prudent, perhaps, in determining not to read or hear even what the scriptures declare, except within the trammels of the Athanasian creed.

I am long since able, I thank God, to look without terror into the sacred volume on this subject, and to receive, not only without reserve, but, I hope, with gratitude, the disclosures which it makes; and the longer I look at it, and the more humbly I listen to its dictates, the

more firmly am I persuaded that the Athanasian doctrine has no foundation in scripture.

From the most careful examination of the subject, it appears to me, that the holy scriptures have not expressly revealed to us the precise nature and dignity either of the Son of God, our Saviour, or of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Looking on this as the fact, I have been led, by my reverence for the scriptures, and for the Author of the scriptures, to set it down in my own mind, that such knowledge is either too high for us, or at least no wise necessary to our salvation.

But, though the scriptures have not taught us, or we may not be able, with our present faculties, to judge with certainty of the intrinsic or comparative dignity of these blessed spirits—one point they have to me rendered sufficiently plain, that how high soever these blessed spirits may stand in dignity and glory; and though they be exalted far above and beyond what we can form any distinct conception of—still are they subordinate to the one great God and “Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.”

The scripture testimony to this truth is now, with God’s blessing, to be fairly submitted to you. Let us hear it with all meekness, and lowliness, and readiness of mind. And may the Spirit of the living God, the guide and the helper

of all sincere Christians, open our hearts, and lead us into the knowledge and belief of the truth—"the truth as it is in Jesus;"—"casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."

For the sake of order, it will be proper to produce the testimony of this kind which the scriptures furnish—first, in reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;—and secondly, in reference to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. And in both, we must limit ourselves to those passages which speak with plainness and precision on the subject;—to transcribe them all, would be in truth a tedious task.

In turning your attention to those scripture testimonies which plainly declare the subordination of the Son to the Father, the most easy and natural course will be, to select a few from each of the gospels, in the very words of Christ himself; and then examine whether his inspired Apostles have taught the same doctrine.

The first portion of the gospel of St. Matthew to which I shall direct your attention, is contained in the 11th chapter, at the 25th verse: "At that time Jesus answered and said, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth*, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father* ;

and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Now whilst these declarations might satisfy us that the precise nature and dignity of the Son have not been clearly revealed, and must therefore be utterly unknown to mortal man: they at the same time plainly and positively assert, that "*all things*" which the Son possesseth have been delivered to him by the Father; obviously and necessarily supposing that the Son is at once distinct from, and subordinate to, that Almighty Father from whom all was received.

When the mother of Zebedee's children came to Jesus, and besought him to grant that her two sons might sit, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, here was his reply: (Matt. xx. 23,) "To sit on my right hand and on my left, *is not mine to give*; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared, of my Father." I ask you here, is any one able to suppose that our Lord designed by these words to represent himself as equal in power to the Father. It is not his to give: the Father had reserved it to himself. Could the fact of his subordination to the Father be more plainly or unequivocally taught?

Matt. xxvi. 39, "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from

me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—42d, "He went away again the second time, and *prayed*, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, *thy will be done.*"—44th verse, "And he left them, and went away again, and *prayed* the third time, saying the same words."—53d verse, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now *pray to my Father*, and he shall presently *give me* more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. xxvii. 46, "And about the ninth hour, Jesus *cried, with a loud voice*, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?—that is to say, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Upon these passages I make no comment; but leave you to judge, whether he who uttered these earnest prayers, and used these pathetic expressions, meant to declare himself to the world as the supreme God, or as *equal to the supreme God*.

This, then, is a specimen of the testimony to the doctrine we are upon, to be found in the gospel of St. Matthew. And in looking through the other evangelists, I shall, for the sake of brevity, purposely omit any passages parallel to those which we have noticed from him.

In the second chapter of Mark's gospel, at the fifth verse, when "Jesus said unto the sick of the palsy, son, thy sins be forgiven thee, there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, why doth this man

thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Does our Lord put a stop to their reasoning, as he might have done on the Trinitarian supposition, by the direct and plain assertion of his Godhead? No—that he has not done, here or elsewhere: he takes a very different course. "He saith to them, why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the *Son of man* hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, and took up the bed, and went forth before them all." Instead of assuming the name or character of God, the only designation he gives himself is that of the *Son of man*; and the power which he claims, was one exemplification of the "power given him."

And here it may be proper to observe, that, according to his own representations, this power to forgive sins was not limited to Christ; but was communicated by him to the first ministers of his gospel, and therefore cannot fairly be employed as an argument of his supreme Deity: for the same argument might be used on behalf of the Apostles; and the argument that proves too much, proves nothing. What are his own

representations? On the very day of his resurrection from the dead, “at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, when the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, peace be unto you : *as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*” Here the power to forgive sins, or to pronounce the remission of sins, is clearly represented as an original commission of the Father to the Son, and descending, through the Son, on his inspired Apostles. And the most decided evidence of its origin with the Father, is that which is afterwards supplied by our Lord himself, when he offers up that merciful prayer for those who were putting him to death—“*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*”

In the last chapter of Mark, after our Lord had commissioned his Apostles to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” the evangelist adds, “so then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was *received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*”

In the second chapter of the gospel by St. Luke, we are distinctly told that his parents “brought him (Jesus) to Jerusalem, *to present him to the Lord:*”—that the child grew, and

waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, *and the grace of God was upon him* :”—and that he “increased in wisdom and stature, and *in favour with God and man*.” Luke iv. 16, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up ; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, *the spirit of the Lord is upon me* ; because he hath *anointed* me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath *sent me* to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind—to set at liberty those that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Which, when he had read, he immediately applied to himself, saying, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”—Verse 43, “And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, *for therefore am I sent*.” On which passages I shall merely observe, that the phrases, “the spirit of the Lord is upon me ;” “he hath anointed me ;” “he hath sent me,” &c. seem altogether inconsistent with the idea of perfect equality. To feel the force of this observation, try how it will sound to change the person, and to say that the Son “anointed” the Father, and “sent him” to preach the glad tidings of the

kingdom. But if this language be inadmissible, what becomes of the equality ?

Luke xxii. 28. “ Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, *as my Father has appointed unto me.*”—Verse, 31 “ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*”—Verse 41, “ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me ; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, *he prayed more earnestly.*” Luke xxiii. 46, “ And when Jesus (on the cross) had cried with a loud voice, he said, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit ;* and having said this, he gave up the ghost.” Here again I must just leave you to judge whether these passages can reasonably be thought to consist with the Athanasian doctrine : and go on to lay before you a few similar representations from the gospel of St. John.

You may recollect it was from John’s gospel chiefly I before transcribed those declarations of our Lord Jesus Christ, which establish the doctrine of the Father’s supremacy ;—and every one of the same declarations might be fairly em-

ployed on the subject before us. But at present I shall confine myself to those which have an immediate bearing on the subordination of the Son, from his own lips.

John iv. 34, "Jesus saith unto them, my meat is *to do the will of him that sent me, and finish his work.*" In the fifth chapter there is a lengthened discourse of our Saviour on this subject, which I would be glad you would read throughout. It was introduced by the following circumstance. Our Lord had miraculously healed an impotent man on the sabbath: "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, my father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal to God." This was *their charge*;—how was it replied to? Not by an assertion of his Godhead, or of his equality with God—such a thing never escapes him. His immediate reply, therefore, was—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, *the Son can do nothing of himself.* The Father judgeth no man, but hath *committed* all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, *which hath sent him.* I can of mine own self do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not

mine own will, but the will of *the Father which hath sent me*. The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me," (not that I am the Father, or equal to the Father,) but "*that the Father hath sent me*. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for *whom he hath sent*, ye believe not."

But look over this entire discourse of our Lord, and you will feel as though it were intended to prevent the very possibility of taking up the common notion of his equality with the Father; and it may serve to excite your surprise, that, notwithstanding the care he hath taken to maintain the supremacy of the one God and Father of all, men have yet been bold enough to affirm, that the Son is in all things equal to the Father.

And it will not be out of place to observe here, that this discourse of our Lord may also show you in what light you are to regard his miraculous works. They have been adduced by some, in proof, not merely of his divinity, but of his supreme Godhead: but Christ never adduced them, save as he has done here, in proof of his *divine mission*, in proof that "*the Father had sent him*." It has been asserted too, that

Christ performed all his miracles *of himself—of his own underived powers*: whereas Christ tells you no such thing. On the contrary, he tells you here, and every where, that he *did* “*nothing of himself* ;” and that “*all power was given him of the Father.*”

And, if you look over the miracles of Christ, you will find this manifest in the most stupendous among them. When he fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, the evangelist tells us, that he “*looked up to heaven,*” and “*gave thanks,*” and “*blessed and brake,*” and gave to the disciples to set before them. When he raised Lazarus from the grave, he acknowledged his miraculous power from on high—“*I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast heard me.*” I repeat it, therefore, that the very miracles of Christ, understood as he himself has explained them, must be regarded as so many evidences of his subordination to the Father. And whoever can argue from them his equality with the Father, must believe himself speaking to those who have not read the New Testament.

John vi. 38. “For I came down from heaven, *not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And this is *the Father’s will* which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”—57th verse, “As the living Father hath sent me, and *I live by the Father.*”

John viii. 28, "*I do nothing of myself; but as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*" John x. 29, "*My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all.*" John xii. 49, "*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*" John xiv. 24, 28, 31, "*The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. For my Father is greater than I. And as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.*" John xv. 10, 15, "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. For all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*" Upon these passages I deem it unnecessary to make a single comment. Common sense will enable you all to judge of them aright. They may be, and they have been, tortured by the ingenuity of the learned, and perverted from their natural and ordinary meaning: but remember that the Bible was not designed for an exercise of learned ingenuity, but for the guide of plain common sense.

I might here transcribe, as completely to my present purpose, the entire seventeenth chapter, with various other portions, of the gospel of St. John: but I shall not;—for those among you who bow before the authority of Christ—and I trust you all do so—must, by this time, perceive, and feel, that his discourses, recorded in the gospels, are full of the doctrine of his subordination to the Father. And I shall, for that very reason, be brief in my selection of passages from the Apostolic records, which teach the same doctrine.

I might, with propriety, quote for this purpose all that I adduced before to prove the supremacy of the Father; but I shall content myself with the following.

1 Cor. xv. 24, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have *delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, *all things are put under him*, it is manifest *that he is excepted, which did put all things under him*. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the *Son also himself be subject unto him* that put all things under him, *that God may be all in all*.”—This is evidently an epitome of the gospel doc-

trine touching the dignity and office of the Son of God. He has a kingdom, and a power, and a glory, conferred on him by the Father Almighty, who hath put all things under his feet. But when all things are said to be under him, it is manifest, saith the Apostle, that he is excepted who did put all things under him. And when the high designs of heaven's mercy shall have been accomplished by his mediation, then shall he deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

To the same purpose is what we read in Eph. i. 22, how the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." As also, Heb. ii. 8, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, *crowned with glory and honour*, that he, *by the grace of God*, should taste death for every man. For it became *him to whom are all things, and by whom are all things*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

To the same purpose, likewise, may be quoted his own words in Revelation, ii. 26, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto

the end, to him will I give power over the nations, *even as I received of my Father.*” As also those in Rev. iii. 21, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, *even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*” All which, as you cannot fail to perceive, go directly and necessarily to establish at once the supremacy of the Father, and the subordination of the Son—upturning the very foundations of the Athanasian doctrine, which teaches their absolute equality in power and glory.

I have thus submitted to you a few of those scripture testimonies, chiefly from the mouth of our blessed Saviour himself, which declare to us, with all plainness, that this beloved Son of God is subordinate to, and therefore not to be in all things identified with, the Father Almighty. But before I quit this part of my subject, there are two or three additional considerations, to which I desire to call your attention.

In the first place, let me remind you of our Lord’s reply to the mother of Zebedee’s children—“To sit on my right, and on my left, *is not mine to give ; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared, of my Father.*” What sentiments were these words calculated to fix in the minds of those who heard them ? What idea do they naturally present to your minds—unaccompanied, as they are, by that solution, which,

though it be nowhere found in scripture, is uniformly and gratuitously employed by Trinitarians to explain it? The solution I allude to, is that of his being understood here as speaking only in his human nature. If our Lord Jesus Christ were the supreme God, or equal to the supreme God, in what sense could it be true, that the honour here sought for, was not at his disposal? And who will dare to suspect him, who was truth itself, of having, here or elsewhere, a concealed or double meaning? But if you believe him speaking the plain truth, you must believe him subordinate to the Father.

For myself, I honestly confess, that my conscientious reverence for the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, will not permit me thus to employ a nice and subtle distinction, of which neither he himself, nor any of the sacred writers, saith a single word, to pervert and get rid of the plain meaning of his plain words;—and all this, for the avowed purpose of causing it to be believed, what he himself has uniformly and unequivocally denied,—that he is in all things God, equal with the Father Almighty. Will men never become ashamed, or afraid, of putting such a construction on the declarations of the Son of God, as would justly be deemed an insult by the lowest of the children of men?

In the next place, let me remind you of our Lord's reply to the disciples, touching his own

knowledge of the day of judgment :—" But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man ; no, not the angels of heaven ; *neither the Son*, but the Father only." By this it will, I think, clearly appear, that as there are some things possible with the Father, which the Son cannot do, so there are some things known to the Father, with which the Son is not, or at least was not, acquainted. And each of these seems distinctly incompatible with the doctrine of perfect equality. With regard to the destruction of the temple, which the disciples enquired about at the same time, he told them, readily and circumstantially, that this should come to pass within that very generation. But as to the day of judgment, he assured them plainly, that none knew when that day would come, save the Father only. Men on earth, angels in heaven, he himself, though the beloved Son of God, were all unacquainted with it : the Father alone knew it. It is impossible to conceive a declaration delivered in plainer language than this. If he had but said that the day of judgment was known to none but the Father, it might have been thought quite enough. But when he takes care to exclude from that knowledge the other orders of intelligent beings, even to himself, he has left no room for cavilling ; and seems as if he had intended to prevent the extravagant imaginations of men, who, notwithstanding, have ven-

tured to affirm, that our Saviour, as God, actually possessed the knowledge which he disavows. Yet such men profess a more than ordinary reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ. If they really feel it, let them discover it, by at least believing what he says. For my part, I cannot join in a gratuitous interpretation of his words, which seems to me a direct impeachment of his sincerity. I shall not cast any such reproach on the blessed Jesus, as to suppose, for a moment, that he denied what he really knew. It is one thing to disavow the possession of knowledge—to withhold knowledge possessed, is another;—to deny the knowledge which one actually possesses, is a third. Our Lord distinctly disavowed the possession of knowledge in the case before us; herein unquestionably speaking the plain truth. In various cases, which you will all recollect, he withheld the knowledge of facts with which he was perfectly acquainted; and herein he, no doubt, acted from unerring wisdom;—but to suppose him thus positively denying that which he actually knew, in any capacity whatsoever, would indeed be to degrade the Son of God below the level of ordinary truth-telling men. He has here told us plainly, that he did not know, what the Father knew; and has therein as plainly declared his subordination to the Father.

You will please farther to recollect the many

places where our blessed Saviour is represented as offering up prayers, not only on behalf of others, but of himself also, to his Father in heaven ;—as praying, not merely with calm and earnest devotion, but in the utmost agony, “with strong crying and tears ;”—as praying, not merely for the sake of example—but in “*solitary places,*” and “*continuing all night in prayer to God.*”

Prayer appears, to my mind, as being, on the part of the person who offers it up, the most conclusive evidence of conscious dependence on the being to whom it is addressed. Now, how should we be able to account for the habitual exercise of prayer—of most humble and importunate prayer, on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ, if it were true, as Athanasians allege, that he is God, equal to the Father ; and of course, equal to the accomplishment of every wish he could form ? Look attentively at the tenor of the prayers which our Lord has so frequently offered up to the Father ; and especially attend to that longest and most consolatory of his prayers, recorded in the 17th chapter of St. John’s gospel ; and ask yourselves, whether it could have entered into the design of our blessed Saviour, of whom these things are recorded, to fix in the minds of his followers, the belief that he is the supreme God, or equal to the supreme God ?

Upon this part of my subject, I shall only farther request you to attend to that portion of my

text, wherein our Saviour declares, without any such distinction as men choose to adopt, that the "Father is greater" than he. When our Lord makes this unqualified declaration, I find no difficulty in understanding him, according to the plain meaning of his words, and in conformity with the general tenor of scripture. But men, by their groundless hypothesis, create difficulties for themselves. And they have found it so perplexing and impossible to reconcile these plain words of Christ with the Athanasian doctrine, that some of the ablest and most judicious defenders of that doctrine have felt themselves obliged to allow some sort of pre-eminence to the Father above the Son: thus virtually giving up the very point in question.

The short way to ascertain whether the words of Christ, and those of the Athanasian creed, be reconcileable, is to place them side by side. Our Lord says, "the Father is greater than I;" but the creed says, "in this Trinity none is greater or less than another." Now, in what sense could our Lord's declaration be true, if the creed be right? Or what comes of the creed, if our Lord have spoken truth? There remains to you but the alternative—to adopt the presumptuous decrees of fallible, erring men, or to embrace the infallible declaration of the Son of God. If you embrace the latter, as you will, you subscribe to the truth of Christ; you sub-

scribe to the truth of the gospel; you subscribe to the doctrine which I have been endeavouring to establish—the doctrine of our Lord's subordination to the Father Almighty.

I have now done what seemed necessary on this part of my subject, by the production of scripture testimony, chiefly in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

But I am aware that the whole force of this testimony is attempted to be turned aside by a very simple contrivance, a nice distinction, which demands our particular notice. The distinction, the contrivance, is this—to allege, and endeavour to have it believed, that in all cases where Christ acknowledges a subordination to the Father, he is to be understood as speaking only in his human nature. If this were any where taught us, either by our Lord himself, or any of his inspired Apostles, it would materially alter the state of the case. But is this really so? Nothing can be farther from the truth. Have we been taught any thing about such a distinction in scripture? Nothing whatsoever. And I shall here, once for all, overturn this plea, by the testimony of scripture itself—the only testimony that is worthy of a moment's consideration; and by both species of scripture testimony, negative and positive.

I observe, first, that in all affirmation, the proof of the affirmative rests with, and should be

produced by, the affirmer. I here call upon those who maintain the interpretation in question, to produce the slightest scripture authority for it: and I assert, without danger of contradiction, that there is no such key of interpretation; that there is not so much as a hint or shadow of any such interpretation in the Bible, as that our Saviour is, in such cases, speaking only in his human nature. If there be any such support for this allegation in scripture, let it be produced; and we shall all receive it with the utmost reverence.

But I observe farther, that this allegation is not only destitute of any positive support from scripture—but there is, what I take to be of the nature of positive scripture testimony against it, and that from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord tells us, for example, in John's gospel, xii, 49, “*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father, which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*” This, then, is one of those instances, wherein Christ is supposed, by the Trinitarian hypothesis, to speak in his human nature. Well, now, turn to the 16th chapter of the same gospel, and attend to what our Lord says (at the 13th verse) of the Holy Ghost, whom he promised that the Father should send in his name, to be the guide

and comforter of his disciples, and who, you know, is one of the co-equal persons of the Athanasian Trinity: "Howbeit, (saith Christ) when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: *for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak;* and he will show you things to come." Now it is not pretended that the Holy Ghost ever assumed the human nature; and therefore, it cannot be alleged that he ever speaks or acts in that nature. Yet our Lord uses the very same language with respect to him, as he does, in similar cases, in reference to himself. He plainly declares that neither of them "*speaks of himself;*" that both of them speak as they heard, and were taught; and thereby as plainly upsets the Athanasian interpretation, and along with it, the doctrine which it was intended to support.

In good truth, that interpretation is nothing more or less than a human contrivance, to bolster up a human error. Divine revelation is a stranger to both of them.

I might occupy your time through a separate and lengthened discourse, in laying before you, in a similar manner, those scripture testimonies which equally declare the subordination of the Holy Ghost. But I am sure you will not deem this necessary; and a very few observations, before I close, will be sufficient. The single quotation which I have already given you, from the

lips of Christ himself, in reference to the dignity and office of the Comforter, might be amply sufficient. I shall just give you one or two more, from the same high authority, and leave you to form your own judgment.

In John's gospel, xv. 26, our Lord saith to the disciples, "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*" John xvi. 7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, *I will send him unto you.*" I here refer it to yourselves to determine, whether this holy person, "the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father;" who is sent by the Son; and who speaketh not of himself, but according to the instructions he has received;—whether this being is to be understood as the supreme God, or equal to the supreme God;—or whether it could have been the intention of our Lord Jesus Christ, who declares these things of him, to leave any such impression on the minds of his followers.

There is but one passage of scripture, which presents any difficulty on this subject; and which has been greedily laid hold of, for the purpose of setting aside the plain and positive declarations of Christ. It may be as well to obviate

that alleged difficulty here, as it may be done easily, and in a few words.

In the Acts of the Apostles, v. 3, "Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." There must be a great lack of scripture evidence for the Athanasian doctrine, when so weak an argument is relied on, and it is the strongest which can be produced, to prove the supreme Deity of the Holy Spirit: for in the same book of scripture, we might find a similar argument to prove the supreme Deity of an angel. Acts xxiii. 9, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or *an angel* hath spoken to him, let us not fight *against God.*" The plain meaning of the above passage is, that, by lying to the Apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, Ananias had in effect lied to the Holy Spirit; and that lying to the Holy Spirit, was the same thing as lying to God himself, who had given them his Holy Spirit. This is no forced interpretation; for you will all recollect that it is quite conformable to the usual phrase of scripture. Thus our Lord says to his Apostles, "He that despiseth *you*, despiseth me; and he that despiseth *me*, despiseth *him that sent me.*" And thus the Apostle Paul says, "He that despiseth, despiseth not *man*, but *God*, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit."

And thus it is, that Ananias, by lying to the Apostles, lied to the Holy Spirit ; and by lying to the Holy Spirit, lied to that God who gave them the Holy Spirit. And here I shall take leave of this part of my subject: for there is, in truth, no other passage of scripture which should raise even the shadow of a difficulty on this point.

I have now submitted to your consideration such scripture testimonies, as appear to me clearly and satisfactorily to prove the position with which I set out,—that the beloved Son of God, our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit of God, the Comforter—however high in dignity and glory they confessedly stand—are yet subordinate, both in power and glory, to the great Father of all. And besides the testimony of scripture on this subject, there is none worthy of a moment's consideration.

I shall not refer you, for authority in doctrine, to fathers, to councils, to creeds of human composition. These all, with me, and I hope with you, pass for nothing, on a subject of this kind. What daring presumption would it be in me, to attach any authority to an opinion, as mine ! And who is there, or has there been, since the days of the Apostles, in whom such a claim must not be regarded as equally presumptuous ? If any man, or body of men, can produce a well-authenticated patent of infallibility—then, but not till then, let Christians surrender the

right of judging for themselves from Holy Scripture.

You are all aware that the doctrine of Trinity, as set forth in the Athanasian creed, has long been established by human authority: but you may not all be aware of the fact, a fact well authenticated in church history,—that it was not till the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian era, that this doctrine assumed the shape and character which it now bears. Till then, Christians generally were satisfied with the theology of the Bible; were satisfied reverently to speak of God, and of the Son of God, and of the Spirit of God, in the language of the Bible. And it were well if Christians generally could be induced to return to the same spirit and to the same practice. It were well if Christians could be taught to rest contented with the sole standard of the Christian scriptures. Then should the churches, in their several orbits, revolve, in perfect harmony, around the only true centre of spiritual unity. Then should they all, notwithstanding any little aberrations, or temporary obscurations, move equably and steadily within the blessed light and heat of the Sun of Righteousness. And then, instead of contending fiercely on points of doubtful disputation—instead of preaching Christ, even of envy and strife, it would be the delightful study of all to promote the good of all, and to preserve “the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.”

Before I conclude this discourse, let me once more rebut a charge which may be directed against the doctrine which it contains, namely—that it goes to degrade the Son, and Spirit of God, and to rob them of their crown of glory. This would be a most awful charge, if there were any truth in it. But I take shelter under the shield of scripture, and do not feel it at all. I have spoken of these glorious beings only in the language of inspiration, in the language of Christ himself and his Apostles; and in company with them, I shall not be afraid to bear the brunt of any charge.

Let those who are accustomed to make this charge beware, lest, without any sufficient warrant from scripture, they subject themselves to the more awful charge, of invading the supremacy of the Father Almighty; and of giving, farther than he authorizes, that glory to any other, which belongeth to himself alone.

There still remains one general division of my subject, (whereon I shall not now enter,) under which I propose replying to the several arguments drawn from scripture, which appear of any weight in support of the Athanasian doctrine. I have been long accustomed to regard scripture as being, on every subject of which it treats, its own best interpreter. I shall employ it in that capacity here. There are names, and attributes, offices, and operations, ascribed to our Lord

Jesus Christ in the scriptures, which are thought to identify him with the Father Almighty. It shall, God willing, be the business of my next discourse to show you, that none of these, when properly understood—comparing scripture with scripture—militate in the least against the general doctrine of divine revelation already laid down. In the mean time, be intreated to keep up your habit of scripture reading; and may the Spirit of the living God direct you and me into the way of truth, and piety, and peace, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON VI.

HOLY SCRIPTURE ITS OWN BEST INTERPRETER.

1 CORINTHIANS, ii. 13.

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

THE pre-existent dignity and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are so plainly declared to us in holy scripture, as to leave me no room for doubt on the subject. At the same time, it appears to me, that, though his high office as Mediator between God and men, and the inestimable benefits thereby secured to our fallen race, have been with all plainness exhibited in the gospel; yet the precise dignity of his nature has been no farther revealed, than by such general declarations, as declare him “the beloved Son of God,” “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” who “had glory with the Father before the foundation of the world.”

Now, if his professing followers had been content, as they should have been, and as it appears they generally were for several centuries, to speak of him in the language of scripture, and to think of him according to the representations of scripture, a great deal of mischief would have been prevented in the Christian world. But there is a propensity in man to go beyond his depth. He early sought to become wise, by eating of the prohibited tree of knowledge; and he has ever manifested a strong wish to go farther into mysteries than is allowed him; and, if possible, on such subjects to be "wise above what is written."

Yet, although this propensity led to many and grievous errors in the primitive ages of the church on other subjects, it so happened, that with respect to the divinity of Christ, there prevailed a very general uniformity of sentiment among Christians, during the first three hundred years after his death. So far as this uniformity obtained, it was secured, under God, simply by his followers being satisfied to express themselves on the subject—"not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." *Then*, Christians knew and spoke of "God the Father Almighty," and of "Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Saviour," and of "the Holy Ghost," the guide and comforter of the faithful, as three distinct

persons: but it does not appear, from the records of the three first centuries, that any such belief had obtained currency among them, as that these three divine persons constituted one being—one God; or that they were all the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

We must look for the origin of this belief at a later period; and we shall find it among the ecclesiastical records of the fourth century. The Emperor Constantine having embraced the faith of Christ, Christianity thence forward became the religion of the empire. A controversy on this very subject having, in an evil hour, originated about that time at Alexandria, between the bishop of that see, and Arius, one of his presbyters; and having, in a few years, spread over the face of Christendom, a council was held, in the year of our Lord 325, at the city of Nice, in Bythinia, composed of three hundred and eighteen bishops, assembled by order of the Emperor, and with the professed design of settling this unhappy controversy. Then and there, after much time spent in the most violent altercations, was drawn up that celebrated formula of faith, known under the name of the Nicene creed; wherein it was, for the first time, asserted that “the Lord Jesus Christ is of *one substance* with the Father;” and whereon was afterwards founded the equally celebrated creed which goes under the name of St. Athanasius, a bishop of

Alexandria in the fourth century; wherein it is decided that we must “worship the Trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance;” with many other presumptuous and contradictory attempts at explaining what the word of God has not explained.

It is proper, however, to observe, that though this latter creed contains, no doubt, the doctrinal views of Athanasius, it was probably composed several centuries after his death; as Dr. Waterland, who wrote the history of it, states that it was not received at Rome till about the year 1014; so that, you see, it is comparatively a novelty.

But from the period of the Council of Nice, we may date that departure from the language of scripture on this subject, which had been hitherto unknown, but which has proved the unhappy source of so much uncharitable controversy from that day to this. Before this time, Christians knew nothing of those unscriptural terms, and modes of expression, which afterwards became, and still continue, familiar in their mouths as household words;—such as Trinity in unity—triune God—incarnate God—suffering God—crucified God—unity of essence—sameness of substance—and many others equally unintelligible, which began then to be introduced into creeds and homilies, and have ever since thrown such a cloud of confusion over the plain and simple doctrine of the gospel of Christ.

The celebrated church historian, Mosheim, in speaking of that period, observes, that “the Christian doctrine, as hitherto taught, preserved its native and beautiful simplicity, and was comprehended in a small number of articles. The public teachers inculcated no other doctrines than those contained in what is commonly called the Apostles’ creed ; and in the method of illustrating them, all vain subtleties, all mysterious researches, every thing that was beyond the reach of common capacities, were carefully avoided.”*

Jurieu, a French writer, who seems to have approved of the innovations of the fourth century, assures us that “the fundamental articles of Christianity were not understood by the fathers of the three first centuries ; that the true system *began* to be modelled by the Nicene bishops ; and was afterwards immensely improved and beautified by the following synods and councils.”†

But the venerable Eusebius, who took a prominent part in the discussions of the fourth century, deeply lamented these innovations ; and asserted that “the use of unscriptural terms was the cause of almost all the confusion and disturbance that had happened in the church ;”—an observation which the whole history of controversy, down to the present times, has amply verified.

* Vol. i. p. 149.

† Jortin’s Rem. vol. ii. p. 29.

Thus it came to pass, that modes of expression, sanctioned by mere human authority, supplanted the language of divine inspiration;—that the crude conceptions of fallible men occupied the place of the truths of God;—and that creeds, concocted in the heat of human passions, and the bitterness of human controversy, were made a kind of convenient substitute for the Bible; and have continued to hang, like so many mill-stones, about the neck of Christianity, from that day to this.

A spirit of theological inquiry has, however, gone abroad, over the Christian world. Men are looking back to the pure fountain of divine truth; and, as they learn to regard the bible with all due reverence, they will gradually lay aside those formularies of human composure, together with the trammels of human authority; and learn, after the example of the primitive Christians, to speak of those things, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”

This would, indeed, be a return to first principles, most devoutly to be wished for. On all subjects beyond our reach, like the present, and on which we can really know nothing but what divine revelation teacheth us, what more desirable—what wiser or more respectful, than that men should learn to limit themselves to the very words of that revelation. These are the primitive

principles, on which it has been my design and sincere endeavour to conduct the present investigation. In laying before you, at considerable length, the scripture doctrine of the pre-existent dignity and glory of the Son of God, our blessed Saviour; and in producing those testimonies which go to establish the supremacy of the Father Almighty, with the kindred doctrine of the subordination of the Son and Holy Ghost; I have offered you, I could offer you, no authority, but that of the Bible. I have clothed my testimony in no other language than that of the Bible. I am anxious to return as nearly as I can, and to bring you with me as nearly as I can, to the primitive, certain, and only sufficient standard of the Christian scriptures. And therefore I have been careful, on the subject before us, to seek my testimonies only in the scriptures, and to produce them only in the language of the scriptures; and I have no doubt you have hitherto received the testimony and the language of scripture with that profound reverence and respect, which are due to every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

There is one division of my subject still remaining; under which I promised to reply to all those arguments drawn from scripture, which appear to be of any weight in support of the Athanasian doctrine. I now mean, with God's blessing, to fulfil that promise. And as I have ever been of opinion that scripture is its own

best interpreter ; and that one of the safest rules of explication is, to interpret those passages which may be dark and difficult, by others which are plain and easy of comprehension ; I shall proceed to execute my remaining task upon these principles—not venturing to speak of divine things “in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

It is not denied, that on either side of this question, take what view of it you may, there are considerable difficulties presented in scripture. On the Trinitarian side, almost every quotation I have hitherto made, with many other passages of the same description, will be found to stand directly in the way. And these obstacles have appeared, to the abettors of that system, otherwise so insurmountable, that they have been driven to the necessity of contriving that nice and curious distinction, by which our Lord is made to utter all those things merely in his human nature—a rule of interpretation which is not only unsupported by scripture, but, as I showed you before, is positively overthrown by scripture. On that view of the doctrine, which I have presented to you from the word of God, we meet with comparatively few difficulties ; and those, such as may, without violence or much labour, be reconciled to the general tenor and teaching of divine revelation.

You must have observed, that in treating of the high subjects which have successively come under review, I have confined myself to the books of the New Testament. I have done so purposely; and my reason is obvious. Whilst I reverence all scripture, as given by inspiration of God, I have been accustomed to regard the writings of the Old Testament as belonging chiefly to a dispensation which was merely preparatory to the gospel. And whilst we do well to take heed to the “sure word of prophecy” which they contain, an inspired Apostle hath taught us to regard even that prophecy but as “a light shining in a dark place,” compared with the splendour of gospel day—the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Any attempt, therefore, to throw strong light on the subject before us, from the writings of the Old Testament, would be like holding a taper to the meridian-sun.

Nevertheless, the Old Testament writings have been largely drawn upon in defence of the Trinitarian hypothesis; and many portions of them have been pressed, very unwillingly, into the service. I shall take notice but of two passages which have been so employed from those more ancient scriptures; and that because they seem chiefly relied on, by those who have so employed them.

The first of these is found in the book of Genesis, i. 26, “And God said, let *us* make man in

our image, after *our* likeness." As also Gen. iii. 22, "And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as *one of us*, to know good and evil." Now, here is no difficulty, if you recollect what the New Testament so plainly tells you, that "God created all things by Jesus Christ;"—that Jesus Christ had "glory with the Father before the world was;"—that he "was in the beginning with God;"—and that "without him was not any thing made that was made." What more easy or natural, then, than to suppose that God the Father, in determining to create man, should thus address himself to his beloved Son, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:"—or, afterwards, "man is become as one of us, to know good and evil;"—language which, while it determines nothing as to number of persons, identity of essence, or sameness of substance, clearly marks that similitude, that likeness, that "image of the invisible God," which the New Testament attributes to Christ. But such language has no more reference to the doctrine of Trinity, as commonly received—the doctrine of three persons in one God—than it has to the polytheism of Greece or Rome.

The second Old Testament passage, which is frequently adduced in support of the supreme Deity of Christ, is found in the prophecy of Isaiah, ix. 6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be

upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." This specimen of eastern description, so common in the prophetic writings, is one of the many passages in the Old Testament that have been applied to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, by self-styled orthodox divines, in the most gratuitous manner, and without any scripture warrant whatsoever. If you look attentively at the seventh chapter of Isaiah, you will find that this oriental description, extraordinary as it may appear, belongs, at least in the first instance, to a ruler whom God promised to raise up at that time in the house of David ; even to that son of Ahaz, who succeeded him in the government, and whose name, Hezekiah, signifies " God my strength," or " the mighty God ;" and of whom it is said, in this seventh chapter, that his name should accordingly be called Immanuel, that is, " God with us." In this chapter you will find, that when the confederate kings of Syria and Ephraim came to war against Jerusalem, it is recorded of Ahaz, the king, that " his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." The prophet is sent to comfort the house of David with a token of deliverance out of the hands of these kings ; and this, you will find at the fourteenth verse, was to be the sign : " Behold,

a virgin (the virgin daughter of Jerusalem, a common phrase in the prophecies,) shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*" If this prophecy referred only to the birth of Christ, how could the deliverance here promised be certified by an event, which did not take place for many centuries after? A part of this prophecy is undoubtedly applied, and most appropriately, to our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel: but it is plain that, in the first instance, this whole prophetic description, in both chapters, belongs to the good King Hezekiah, and to the happy deliverance which God wrought by him for the house of David. There are several portions of that in the ninth chapter most strikingly and beautifully descriptive, and which may be fairly employed as descriptive of the person, character, and office of Christ, our blessed Saviour. But if you apply the whole literally to him, look at the conclusions to which you are inevitably led. If you look upon him as the Almighty God, you must believe that that God was "a child," and was "born" into the world.—If you look upon him as being literally "the everlasting Father," you must believe that

he was the father of himself—thereby destroying that very distinction between the Father and the Son, which Trinitarians themselves wish to preserve. For they shrink, as they ought, from the bare idea of confounding the persons; and accordingly they are very willing to translate these words, not “the everlasting Father,” but “the Father of the age to come.” Nor do they ever venture to exchange the terms Father and Son between the first and second persons of their Trinity: thus, in point of fact, giving up the doctrine of absolute equality, of absolute identity, for which, in words, they contend.

I shall not take notice of any more of these forced authorities, from the Old Testament. If you read those prophecies therein contained, which have a plain and immediate reference to the promised Messiah, they will be found so far from representing him as the supreme God,—that they uniformly represent him as the messenger and the servant of the supreme God, and such other titles as clearly indicate subordination. And, what is a good deal to the present purpose, they have all along been so understood, by the people to whom they were addressed. For, though the prophets were read every sabbath day, in the synagogue of the Jews, I believe it never has been alleged that the doctrine of the Trinity, or any thing approaching to it, ever formed a part of the creed of that people.

We turn, therefore, to the New Testament, and to the consideration of the chief of those passages which have been adduced therefrom, in support of the supreme Deity of Christ : for, if the doctrine be true, it will be found there, and found plainly taught.

Matthew, i. 23.—“ Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.” These words were quoted by the evangelist, from the prophecy which we have just reviewed : and, we need not think it strange, that such a title as this, should be conferred on the Son of God, our spiritual deliverer, when we find the same title conferred on the son of Ahaz, who was a mere temporal deliverer. There is no comparison between the value of the two deliverances : but it was the same God, whose hand and power accomplished both ;—in the one instance, by the instrumentality of Hezekiah ; and in the other, by that of his beloved Son. And on both, was therefore conferred the title of Immanuel, or “ God with us.” Doubtless, our Lord Jesus Christ has an incomparably higher claim to this title, than any human being whatsoever. But that no aid can be derived from this title, to the doctrine in question, you may satisfy yourselves, by only looking over those alphabetical tables of proper names, with their explanations from

the original, which are to be found in the most of our larger Bibles. There, among many similar, you will find the following names, with their significations thus annexed:—"Abiel, God my father;" "Elijah, God the Lord;" "Ezekiel, the strength of God;" "Ishmael, God who hears;" "Immanuel, God with us;" "Lemuel, God with them." There is nothing conclusive, therefore, in this name, Immanuel; for by the same rule you might prove the supreme Deity of many besides our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the subject of our Lord's titles generally, we may observe, that it need not excite our surprise that this glorious being, who is represented as next in dignity to the Father, and who has had such extraordinary honours and powers conferred upon him by the Almighty, should likewise have some most extraordinary names bestowed upon him in scripture.

Thus, it is readily admitted, that in John's gospel, we read, that "the word was God;" that, in the same gospel, xx. 28, Thomas called him "my Lord and my God;" that, in Hebrews, i. 8, God himself addresseth him thus, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." These, I believe, are the only other passages of the New Testament, wherein the name of God is directly, and without dispute, applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, in each of these

as is ever the case, you will find something, either in the form of expression, or in the context, or in both, that serves to distinguish him from that still greater being, whom he himself acknowledges to be his Father and his God.

Thus, whilst the evangelist tells us that “the word was God,” he tells us plainly that “the word was *with God*.” This would either have no meaning, or, in truth, would go to destroy “the divinity, if he had meant to represent the word as the supreme God;—for what other God could the supreme God be with? At the 14th verse, he observes, “and the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory (not as of the supreme God, but) as of the only begotten of the Father.” For if he had meant the supreme God, how then could he have said, as he has, at the 18th verse, “no man hath *seen God* at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Thomas’s exclamation of sudden surprise—“my Lord, and my God,” and that, too, from a man who, but the moment before, was “faithless and unbelieving,” and appears to have regarded our Lord as nothing better than an impostor, will surely not be able to overturn, in any thinking mind, the express testimony of our Lord himself, in the 17th verse of the same chapter—“I am not yet ascended to my Father;

but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *my Father and your Father*, and to *my God and your God.*"

Thus, also, in Hebrews, i. 8, when the Father saith unto the Son, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom;" a superficial reader might conclude him the supreme God. But let the most superficial reader look at the very next verse, uttered by the same sovereign being, and his conclusion falls to the ground:—"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; *therefore God, even thy God*, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." If Christ were meant to be represented as the supreme God, who could there be that might be called *his God*? Who, in that case, might anoint *him* with the oil of gladness? Who, in that case, ought to be regarded as *his fellows*?

In this manner you will find the Trinitarian argument, derived from this title, directly overturned in the very passages in which it is found.

But it is proper farther to meet this argument by the following observations. The term God, as implying authority and dominion, is often in scripture applied to beings whom we should never think of confounding with the supreme God. Thus, Exodus, vii. 1, "And the Lord said unto Moses, see, I have made *thee a God* to Pharaoh." Judges, magistrates, and civil rulers, are deno-

minated *Gods*, in Psalm lxxxii. 6. Even the spirit of evil, who “blindeth the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,” is, in 2 Cor. iv. 4, styled “*the God of this world.*” I might multiply examples, to show you that the mere application of this name affords no support to the Trinitarian hypothesis. But, without dwelling thereon, I observe farther, that our Lord Jesus Christ never, in so much as one instance, applied this title to himself. He never said either that he was God, or that he was equal with God—which, if the doctrine were true, would have been a most unaccountable omission. The Jews, indeed, at one time charge him (John v. 18,) with “*making himself equal with God.*” But does he admit the charge? No! He repels it by a lengthened reply, commencing with these words—“verily, verily, *the Son can do nothing of himself;*” declaring, that “*authority was given him,*” and “judgment committed to him, by the Father;” and reiterating the assertion with which he sets out, “*I can of mine own self do nothing.*” At another time, the Jews charge him with “*making himself God.*”—John x. 33. Does he admit the charge now? No more than before. “Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, *ye are Gods*, (namely, the magistrates, or civil rulers.) If he called

them Gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said (not that I am God, but) that *I am the Son of God.*" We have, therefore, on this subject, not merely the silence of Christ, but we have his direct and positive disclaimer.

There are three other passages of scripture, wherein Trinitarians contend that the name of God is attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first is Romans, ix. 5, wherein, according to our translation, Christ seems to be styled "over all, God blessed for ever." This is no place for the introduction of Greek criticism. But those who are acquainted with the original, will perceive that the verse in which these words stand, might be so translated as to run thus :— "Whose are the fathers, (the Apostle is speaking of the Israelites,) of whom, as concerning the flesh, is Christ ; and whose is the God over all, blessed for ever." And this would be in close conformity with other similar enumerations by the same Apostle : for example, "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." But even if the translation here were correct, as I believe it is not, and that Christ is called "*God over all,*" we must still say, with the same Apostle elsewhere, "When

all things are put under him, it is manifest that *he is excepted which did put all things under him.*”

The second of these passages is 1st Timothy, iii. 16, where we meet with this language—“great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.” The true reading of this passage in the original has not been well settled. With that, however, I shall not trouble you; but reading it as it stands in our translation, “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached into the Gentiles, believed on in the world, *received up into glory* ;”—let me only ask you, in what sense is it supposable, that the supreme God, who “fills heaven and earth,” and is represented to us as unchangeable, could be “received up into glory?” We know with what ease and correctness this language applies to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The third and remaining passage wherein it is contended that Christ is called God, is 1st John, v. 20. In connexion therewith, read the 19th verse:—“We know that we are of *God*, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the *Son of God* is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” The Apostle in this passage is

evidently speaking both of God, and of the Son of God; and in the concluding sentence, he sums up what he has said of both, in these words—"this is the true God," namely, the Father; and this is "eternal life," namely, the Son, through whom he hath bestowed that inestimable gift. For we should not suppose that the Apostle here applies the title of the "true God" to the Son, in direct contradiction to the exclusive language of our blessed Lord himself, when, in speaking of the same subject, he addresseth the Father in these words, recorded by the same St. John:—"this is life eternal, that they might know *thee, the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

I shall close my observations on the use of this name, by the plain declaration of an inspired Apostle, 1 Cor. viii. 5, "*There is none other God but one*. For though there be *that are called Gods*, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are Gods many, and Lords many,) but to us there is *but one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

There are several places in scripture, where the Father and the Son are said to be *one*; from which it has been rashly inferred that they are one being—one God. Among these I should not notice the famous passage, 1 John, v. 7, where it is said that "there are three that bear record

in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one ;” except for the purpose of stating, that it did not belong to the original text ; that it was never once quoted in the early controversies on this subject ; and that it has long since been given up as spurious by candid Trinitarians—not having been found in any copy of the scriptures of an older date than the art of printing, about four hundred years ago. But if it were genuine, the observations on the following passage would apply to it with equal force. The passage I allude to is John x. 30 —“ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father *are one*.” It was upon this that the Jews charged our Lord with “ making himself God ;” to which groundless charge he replied as before quoted ; and yet Christians continue, upon the same ground, to make the same assertion. Our Lord does not say, here or elsewhere, that the Father and he were *one God* ; that would have settled the question. But his meaning is easily ascertained by reference to his own explanation, contained in John xvii. 11, “ Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me,

that *they may be one, as we are.*" And again, at the 20th verse, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, *that they all may be one*, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, *that they also may be one in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, *that they may be one, even as we are one*;" making it as plain as words can, that—*not identity of essence—but unity of will*, was his meaning.

There are other scripture expressions, which, as Trinitarians allege, go to invest Christ with all the incommunicable attributes of Deity. Let us examine a few of the strongest.

Thus he says of himself, Rev. i. 11, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." This is the only passage of any weight which has been, or can be, adduced in support of his absolute eternity—an attribute which is no where expressly claimed for him. And it may help you to understand his meaning in this passage, if you read the following, Rev. iii. 14—where he styles himself "*the beginning of the creation of God*;" Col. i. 15, where the Apostle Paul expressly calls him "*the first born of every creature*;" and Rev. i. 5, where the Apostle John denominates him "*the first begotten from the dead.*"

The omnipresence of Christ, in the same sense with the Father, is sought to be inferred from

his own gracious promise, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This is a most glorious and comfortable truth; a truth in which we should all most cordially rejoice. But this blessed truth may be received and rejoiced in by Christians, without ascribing the absolute omnipresence of the Deity to our Lord Jesus Christ. His own words, John xiv. 25, “These things have I spoken unto you, *being yet present with you;*” and the words of the Apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. v. 3, “I verily, as absent in the body, *but present in the spirit;*” and to the Colossians, ii. 5, “Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I *with you in the spirit*”—making all due allowance for the vast difference between the beloved Son of God and his Apostle—may lead us to understand our Lord’s meaning in this gracious promise, so as not to confound him with that Being, who fills heaven and earth by the very necessity of his nature.

That our blessed Lord knows what is done in the churches, and that he searcheth the hearts of the children of men, is the undoubted doctrine of the gospel. But if, by such representations, you think you can establish his absolute omniscience, you may, by the same rule, as well prove the omniscience, not only of his Apostles, who had the faculty of “*discerning spirits,*” but of all Christians, whom the Apostle John thus

describes—"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, *and ye know all things.*" Such expressions are not to be understood according to the letter. Besides, our Lord himself, however extensive his knowledge, positively disavows omniscience, in the same sense with the Father, when he tells us that he knows not of the day and hour of judgment, which are known to the "*Father only.*"

"I can do all things," saith the Apostle, "through Christ Jesus strengthening me." In a similar sense, but doubtless in a much higher degree, our blessed Lord may be said to do all things, through the great power conferred on him of the Father. But those passages which are thought to attribute absolute omnipotence to Christ, ought certainly to be understood in such a sense, as not to contradict his own positive declarations, when he tells us that "to sit on his right hand and on his left, is *not his to give*;" and that *all the powers* which he possessed, high and inconceivable as they may be to us, were, nevertheless, "*given him of the Father.*"

It is said in scripture, that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." That is, probably, that the Son of God, in human nature, was the fullest display that could be given of the Divine attributes, in a bodily form, But whatever this may mean, it must all be referred to the good pleasure of the Father Almighty—"for it pleased the Father that in him

should all fulness dwell." And we cannot suppose the Apostle meant that all Christians should become Gods, when he prays that "*they may be filled with all the fulness of God.*"

And here I desire it to be understood, that, by the scripture quotations under these heads, I do not mean to institute a comparison between the attributes of our Divine Master and those of any among his followers, or those of any inferior nature whatsoever. Because I am persuaded, by the plain representations of scripture, that our Lord Jesus Christ is invested with prerogatives and powers incomparably superior to those of men, and of angels. Who, among the children of men,—who, among the sons of the mighty, may be brought into comparison with him, who hath all *all power in heaven and earth given him*, and who is truly styled "*the image of the invisible God.*"

The form of Christian baptism cannot properly be understood as bearing testimony to the doctrine of three persons in one God. The Son of God, and the Holy Ghost, are represented in the gospel as great and glorious spirits, to whom is committed the dispensation of the covenant of grace to fallen man. And is it strange that the rite of initiation to that covenant should be performed—first, in the name of God, the Father, the source of that covenant; secondly, in the name of the Son, the anointed Saviour un-

der that covenant ; and thirdly, in the name of the Holy Ghost, who, under that covenant, is the appointed sanctifier of the people of God ?

The form of apostolical benediction is as little to be relied on, in the same view. For as that form does not always take in the three persons of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so neither is it always confined to them. Rev. i. 4, “ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia : grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; *and from the seven spirits which are before his throne* ; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.” If the apostolical benediction taught any thing about the persons in the Godhead, on what principle is it that the number has been fixed at three ?

Christ’s high office as judge of the world is supposed to ascertain the fact of his supreme Deity. There is one sense in which God himself is judge, and there is another in which the Son of God is judge ; and they are both comprehended and explained by the Apostle, when he says, Rom. ii. 16, “ In the day when *God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ.*” Remember what he himself said to the disciples, Matt. xix. 28, “ Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, *judging* the twelve

tribes of Israel." This, doubtless, is to be understood in a sense quite subordinate to the judgment of Christ. But remember also what he hath said of himself—that "*all judgment is committed to him*" of the Father; and what the Apostle has said of him, that he "*is ordained of God to be judge of the quick and the dead.*" And we may rest assured, that He who hath appointed him to that high, interesting, and glorious office, has given him all powers, has communicated to him all capabilities, necessary to the full and perfect discharge of it. But there is nothing, even in this extraordinary office, which necessarily identifies him with the Father Almighty.

His own words, John xiv. 9, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," may appear, to superficial readers, to prove the absolute identity of the Father and the Son. But if these words were to be so understood, such an interpretation would not only go to confound the persons, and annihilate that distinction which Trinitarians themselves wish to support, but they would flatly contradict the testimony of Christ himself, when he declares that "*no man hath seen God at any time*; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Besides, the form of expression is clearly analogous to the usual phrase of Christ, "he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiv-

eth me, receiveth him that sent me ;” by which expressions we never think of establishing the personal identity of all the parties.

The only expression in scripture, which seems to claim for Christ an *equality with God*, is to be found in Philippians, ii. 6 ; “ thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Our Lord’s previous and positive disavowal of any such claim might lead us to suspect some inaccuracy in the translation here. The Apostle is exhorting Christians to humility and lowliness of mind, by the example of Christ ; and, according to the present rendering, the attitude in which our Lord is presented of claiming equality with God, would seem unfavourable to his argument. But the passage may, without violence, be rendered thus—“ thought it not robbery *to be like unto God*.” By this translation, you at once give force to the Apostle’s reasoning, and reconcile the expression to the general teaching of scripture. And then the entire passage will run thus : “ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be like unto God ; nevertheless, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore *God also hath highly ex-*

alted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*" If it were the doctrine of scripture, or of this passage, that Christ is the supreme God, what meaning would there be in the declarations, that he was "in the form of God?" or, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God?" In what sense could the most high and immutable God "make himself of no reputation," and "become obedient unto death?" Or who is the God that could "*exalt him*,"—or where was there room for his exaltation, to higher degrees of glory than he always possessed?

The only point, of any weight, that remains to be noticed, is the worship which is alleged to be given to Christ, and which it is thought represents him as the supreme God. I need not remind you that the term worship, as used in the scriptures, does not always mean that adoration which belongs exclusively to the God and Father of all: and that its signification is limited and explained by the persons and the objects to whom it is applied. Thus, to give you one or two instances out of many: in Daniel, ii. 46, Nebuchadnezzar "*worshipped Daniel*;" and in Luke, xiv. 10, the words of Christ himself are, "then shalt thou have *worship* in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee."

It is cheerfully admitted that high honour and worship are due to Christ, as Mediator between God and men. But where does he himself ever claim to be worshipped as the Father? Or where have we in scripture the fact of his ever having been worshipped as the supreme God? No where. On the contrary, he tells us, that “*the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth.*” When his disciples sought his instructions in the duty of prayer, he directed them to address their petitions to the same *Father in heaven*, to whom he addressed his own. And in speaking even of the period of his highest exaltation, he said to them, “In that day *ye shall ask me nothing.* Whatsoever ye shall ask *the Father in my name*, he will give it you.”—These instructions of Christ seem to make it plain, that the worship which is due to him is mediatorial worship. And this worship, I apprehend, we render to our Lord Jesus Christ, when, conformably to his own instructions, we offer up our prayers to the Father Almighty, *in the name*, and through the mediation of his “*be-loved Son, in whom he is well pleased;*” and expect an answer of peace to our humble petitions, *for his sake.*

The very idea of his *mediation*, and of his *intercession*, should prevent our regarding the glorious being who performs these high offices, as the ultimate object of our adoration. When he

requires it of all men to “honour the Son, as they honour the Father who sent him,” it is not on the ground of any claim to be God, equal with the Father; but on ground that cannot sustain any such claim of equality—the ground that “all judgment had been *committed to him by the Father.*”

When Stephen, at his death, was favoured by the vision of the glory of Christ, he addressed him not as the supreme God, but as the “*Son of man, sitting on the right hand of God.*”—Whilst it is right that “in the name of Jesus every knee should bow” before the throne, it is equally necessary that “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*”

This distinction is clearly and uniformly preserved, even in the highest ascriptions of honour and glory to the Redeemer, of which the scriptures give us any account. Thus it is that the redeemed in heaven offer him their homage: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests *unto God and his Father*, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” And the whole of the heavenly homage is represented as offered to him, not in the character of the supreme God, but as distinguished from the supreme God, in the character of the “*Lamb that was slain.*” “They sung a new song, say-

ing, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood.* And I heard ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, worthy is *the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto *Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."*

I have now replied to all those arguments drawn from scripture, which appear of any weight in support of the Athanasian doctrine. A few others might be noticed ; but they are of small comparative importance ; and I shall here, in a very few words, sum up the entire argument, as it regards the person and dignity of the Son of God.

Whilst the testimony of holy scripture evidently will not permit us to identify him with the Father Almighty, it at the same time clearly teacheth us to regard him as a being next in power and glory to the supreme God—a being who "had glory with the Father before the world was;" and who has been employed as the highly honoured agent of God in the creation

and government of the world—who was sent by God, and yet voluntarily came into the world, in the fulness of time, to redeem our fallen race, by offering himself a propitiation for the sins of the whole world;—and who, because he thus humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, is now highly exalted by the right of God; has obtained a name above every name; is ordained to be judge of the quick and the dead; is now honoured and worshipped as the great Mediator between God and men; and will be associated with the Father of all in the praises of eternity. “Salvation to our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever. Amen.”

I have now, pursuant to my original proposal, gone through what appeared to me necessary in laying before you the scripture doctrine of the divinity of the Son of God, our ever blessed Saviour—guarding this important subject as carefully as I could from the deficiencies of Socinianism, on the one side, and from the redundancies of the Athanasian doctrine, on the other. Compared with the doctrine of the New Testament, they both appear to me erroneous extremes. The one is an error of defect; the other is an error of excess. The scripture doctrine seems to lie between. And though it may appear safer to attribute too much glory, rather

than too little, to our exalted Redeemer, the safest and best course is, to keep as near to the plain and obvious teaching of scripture as we can :—I say the plain teaching of scripture—for, however high and difficult the subject we have been treating of may be, what the scriptures have taught us of it seems sufficiently plain. There are points connected therewith, which we may be curious to know, which yet are withheld from us. For example, the precise dignity of the nature of Christ has not been clearly revealed; whilst the general scripture declarations, which raise him far above the nature of man, and yet do not elevate him to a perfect equality with the supreme God, seem intelligible to the commonest capacity.

I know it is common to say, that the doctrine of Trinity—the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead—is a mystery, and therefore unfit for examination. Doubtless there are some doctrines of Christianity altogether above our comprehension; and if the doctrine before us were taught in scripture, we should be ready to believe it, however mysterious. For a doctrine may be above our reason, and yet perfectly true; and if it be not against reason, there is nothing to hinder our credence, on the ascertained authority of revelation. But a doctrine that is not certainly founded on scripture, is not to be received on human testimony, merely because it

happens to be mysterious and unintelligible ;— for, on that principle, what is there that you should refuse? And yet this is the only principle urged by some in the case before us.

When any doctrine is proposed to your belief, your first business and care should be, to ascertain whether it be really taught in scripture. If, on a careful examination, you find it so ; then, whether it be intelligible throughout, or connected with mystery, you are bound implicitly to receive it, as the truth of God. If, after a careful examination, you find it otherwise, then, however intelligible or unintelligible it may be, you are equally bound in duty to repudiate and reject it, as the foul invention of man.

It is in this way, and on these principles, I wish you to treat the several doctrinal views which have been proposed to you in the progress of this investigation. I have stated to you, that, after a serious scrutiny, the contending doctrines of Socinus and Athanasius, appear to me equally unfounded in scripture. But it is not for me to sit in judgment on those who entertain either of them :—“to their own master, they stand or fall.” Regarding them both, however, as errors of great importance, I feel a sincere desire that you should be free from them.

I need not, I think, repeat it, that I do not foolishly expect any of you to adopt, or to reject any doctrine, because I have done so. I

claim no attention to any opinion, considered as mine. But I do call for your submission to the authority of divine revelation. I call upon you to “search the scriptures:”—and to search them without reference to the opinion of man:—search them as the proper and sufficient standard of the Christian faith:—search them with humble and teachable minds:—search them with earnest prayer for the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. They are the only infallible guide. They contain all things essential to the care of your spiritual interests. They are “profitable for doctrine.” They “make wise unto salvation.” They give understanding to the simple. In a word, they have the living God for their author:—they have the salvation of souls for their object:—they have truth, without any mixture of error, for their contents. A few inaccuracies may have crept into our translation of the scriptures, but they seem to be of comparatively trifling importance. And when you consider the changes, and the hands through which they have come—it should be regarded as nothing less than a standing miracle, that the scriptures of truth have been handed down in such purity, through so many generations, to our own time. Receive them cordially, my beloved brethren, as the sole rule of your faith and practice; and fearlessly and resolutely turn away from the doctrines and commandments of men. The allegiance you owe to your “one Master,”

absolutely requires this of you. “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free ; and be not entangled with any yoke of human bondage.” He is your only lawgiver and judge in those matters which concern your eternal salvation. You will not be justified in regarding the greatest authority upon earth, in opposition to, or in the neglect of, what he has expressly taught. And whilst it should be regarded as our first duty to follow him alone, it ought to be our highest comfort to recollect, that to him alone are we, in the end, to render our account, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

It may be, that a difference of opinion on the subject of the dignity and office of Christ may still, to a certain extent, prevail among us—it would be nothing less than miraculous, were it not so. This, possibly, has always been the case among a people who claim and exercise the right of judging for themselves. This probably will, more or less, continue to be the case. But so long as there is, and can be, no attempt to bind each other’s conscience, I see nothing in such a difference that should interrupt the kindest Christian feeling, or the most sacred Christian fellowship. We are all, I trust, heartily agreed on most points of gospel doctrine : our differences, when there are any, I hope, relate to comparatively few. Those on which we are fully agreed,

I take to be the main and essential things :—the few on which we may partially differ, I take to be comparatively unimportant. But the spirit of Christian forbearance, love, and charity, we are taught to regard as of more importance than them all. It will be proper for us to follow up the subjects we have been upon, by an attentive consideration of the true standard of Christian faith, and the scripture terms of Christian communion. These are both subjects of high interest and importance to the disciples of Christ ; and I purpose, therefore, God willing, to address you on the first of these subjects, on the next Lord's day. In the mean time, may God endue us all with the spirit of truth, and peace, and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE AS A RULE OF FAITH.

2 TIMOTHY, iii. 16.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

HAVING been induced by circumstances, with which you are all acquainted, to lay before you at some length, in several late discourses, what I take to be the scripture doctrine of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, with some other doctrines closely connected therewith; I naturally felt anxious to rest my views on the only foundation that is fit to support them—the solid ground of the Christian revelation. There is

nothing else capable of furnishing any satisfactory testimony, in reference to those doctrines which properly constitute the Christian faith. And, therefore, in the execution of my task, it has been my endeavour to turn away your minds and my own from all the decisions of human authority, and to fix them on the plain, unsophisticated truths, revealed to us in the holy scriptures. And in guarding my views of that interesting subject, from the errors of defect on the one hand, and those of excess on the other, I have been careful to express them, as much as possible, in the very words of Christ and his Apostles. Whatever difficulties presented themselves in my way from scripture, I endeavoured to explain by scripture itself—on the safest and most reasonable rule of explication—interpreting the dark and doubtful by the plain and positive; and speaking of those things, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth—comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

In the course of our investigation, I have repeatedly and earnestly urged you to an humble, serious, and impartial perusal of the Christian scriptures, as being the only sufficient and infallible test of the doctrines which have been laid down. If you have done so, with an honest desire to find the truth, and in a faithful dependence on the blessing of God, and the guidance

of his Holy Spirit—then are you qualified to judge whether my views be conformable to scripture or not. If you have neglected to do so; if you are not intimately acquainted with the teaching of the word of God;—then, whatever other teaching you may have had, and however confident you may be of the rectitude of your opinions, it is plain that you know little, and care as little, about the matter. I trust and hope there are not many among you, my beloved brethren, who come under this latter description. But whether you belong to the class of those who may be regarded as the sincere, humble, honest inquirers after the truth of the scriptures; or of those who may be said to be blindly devoted to the decisions and dogmas of fallible men;—it may be well to follow up the interesting subjects we have been upon, by turning your attention strongly on the sufficiency and perfection of holy scripture as the sole standard of Christian faith, with the duty and obligation thereby imposed of refusing subjection to any other; and, farther, by endeavouring to ascertain from scripture the duty of Christians towards each other; who, though differing on some few speculative or controverted points, are yet agreed in the main essential doctrines of the gospel of Christ. For the first of these purposes I have made choice of those words of the Apostle Paul: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,

and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

On the subject of the divine authority and perfection of holy scripture, taken in a general view, almost all Christians and Christian churches seem nearly agreed. At least, they generally profess to think, that a divine revelation was vouchsafed to man, to serve as the rule of his faith, the measure of his practice, and the foundation of his hope. But when they come more into detail; when they come to the adjustment of particulars, there are few churches which seem willing to rest satisfied with the standard of the Bible. They appear generally to act on the principle, that there is an expediency, if not a necessity, for some collateral standard—some creed of human composing, drawn up "in the words which man's wisdom teacheth"—as though they conceived themselves capable of improving that standard of faith drawn up "in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Now it is obvious that this practice, wherever it is found, is directly inconsistent with the general profession, of regarding the holy scriptures as the true and sole criterion of faith. But this practice is found to prevail, more or less, in almost all the churches of Christendom. Of the Church of Rome it seems unnecessary to speak

in this matter—as, by her tradition, and her groundless claim of infallibility, she has sought out so many inventions, and raised around her such a mass of human contrivances, as have well nigh overwhelmed the Christianity of the Bible. Although, it must be confessed, she acts with some degree of consistency in discountenancing, and, so far as her influence extends, prohibiting the general perusal of the scriptures as the sole rule of faith; well knowing that if the sacred volume were consulted and revered as it ought to be, all those clouds which have been congregating around her for so many ages, and under the darkness of which there has been so much hoodwinking of mankind, would be gradually and speedily dispersed, as the vapours of the night are scattered before the morning sun.

It was just in this way, and by this process, it was by a direct reference to the Bible, that such a blessed illumination broke in upon the Christian world at the period of the Reformation. Whenever men opened their eyes upon the scriptures, the light of truth from heaven shone full upon them; and happy has been the general result.

There is no question, that the bad passions of human nature were brought very much into collision during the struggle. This, perhaps, was in some measure unavoidable, in such circumstances. But He whose truth was concerned in the issue, can bring good out of evil, and order

out of confusion. He can make all things work together for good ; and cause even the wrath of man to minister to his praise. And if we look over the Christian world at this day, we cannot but be struck with the vast superiority in civilization, morality, and general intelligence, so clearly discernible in those portions of it which have been rescued from that long continued darkness, and restored, in some measure, to the light of the gospel ; and discernible, just in proportion to their more or less complete restoration to the enjoyment of unadulterated gospel light.

It is, however, much and deeply to be regretted, that even in the most favoured portions of the Christian world, there is still to be met with an admixture of those untoward ingredients ; which, if they do not intercept the light from heaven, do at least contribute to dim its radiance, and tinge its complexion, and cause it to show as “ a light shining in a dark place.” Even in the respectable and venerable national churches of this empire, some things of this antisciptural character still remain, and are likely to remain. In the accredited standards of the one, you meet with that extraordinary production, the Athanasian creed, with its damnatory clauses, so abhorrent to the best feelings of the most Christian people of her communion. In the accredited standards of the other, you find a strong infusion of the rankest ingredients of Calvinism, so unpa-

latable to the taste of her most cultivated children. And in both, these things must be solemnly subscribed or sworn to, by all those who are put forward as the public teachers of Christianity.

Now, whilst such is the known practice of these churches, neither of them lays any claim to infallibility. If they advanced such a claim, though it would, doubtless, be an additional error, it would certainly deserve the praise, at least, of greater consistency. If any of them be in error, (and where is the security that they are not in error?) in any of those important doctrines to which we have alluded, and which must receive the solemn assent, and consent, of all who are appointed to minister in holy things, you may readily conceive the effects which such a system is likely to produce.

A candidate for the ministry of the gospel, has devoted his entire youth to such studies as are preparatory to the sacred office. At the threshold of the church, he is met by one or other of those formularies of human devising. He gives it, almost as a matter of course, if not of necessity, his solemn avowal. It is scarcely supposable, that, at so early a period of life, he can have fully made up his mind upon points of abstruse and metaphysical theology, some of which it might just be as well to leave unsettled all the days of his life. If he be conscientious, and

remember his engagements, his understanding is from that moment in trammels; he dares not inquire; his mind is sealed against farther information; he must not even read the scriptures, save in conformity with his adopted standard, lest a troublesome light should break in upon him; or, if it should break in upon him, he must keep it to himself. Thus it is to be feared, in too many instances, Christian inquiry is stifled; Christian light is shut out; or, what is still worse, Christian sincerity poisoned in its source. Think of these things, and shudder at the consequences to the individuals, and to Christian interests at large.

The time, let us hope, is approaching, when these things will be seen as they ought; when those venerated churches shall purify themselves from the inventions of men, and return to the uncontaminated standard of the divine word.

In that branch of the Christian church with which we stand more immediately connected, we are happily freed, in a great measure, from that yoke, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. The necessity for subscription to human creeds and confessions has gradually ceased, and been at length formally laid aside; and though it may, in a few instances, be still required, I believe it is done in a very mitigated form.

Those who speak without thinking, and may

be said to glory in their shame, are accustomed to cast it up as a reproach to us, that in our church we have no acknowledged standard of faith. Do they consider what they say? Do they indeed believe that the Bible is no standard of faith? We have, it is true, no substitute for the Bible. We have, at length, nothing to stand between us and the Bible—nothing, we hope, to turn away our attention from the Bible. And instead of feeling it a reproach, we regard it as our peculiar glory, that we have no standard of faith but the Christian scriptures.

There are those indeed among ourselves, as may always be expected, men of ambitious, but of narrow minds, who would willingly “lord it over God’s heritage;” who are dissatisfied that our Christian liberties should remain to us, as Christ, our Master, has left them; and who seem prepared, whenever circumstances may favour the attempt, to trench upon the distinguishing principles of our church,—the rights of conscience, the exercise of individual judgment, and the sufficiency of holy scripture,—by the superinduction of certain formularies of faith, drawn up in the words, and according to the wisdom of fallible men. I trust there is as much Christian intelligence, and such a spirit of Christian liberty and independence, both among the clergy and laity of our church, as will prevent the re-introduction of such things. If our church,

now in possession of her liberty, and glorying, as she may, in the sole and single standard of the Bible, should ever again subject herself, or permit herself to be subjected, to the trammels of human authority, or to the dictation of rash and aspiring men, she must sink, and she will deserve to sink, in the estimation of discerning men.

I am well enough aware of the difficulties that in our church must be encountered in the maintenance of our Christian rights. I know the powerful temptation to truckling which is presented to many of my brethren in the ministry—a temptation before which God forbid any of them should fall. You all know how strongly the popular odium has been excited against those who presume to take their creed from the Bible alone. And you will all know how to estimate the zeal of those who are capable of wielding such an instrument as popular odium, for the suppression of individual judgment, and the subversion of Christian rights.

You no doubt entertain a just abhorrence of the inquisition, established in some of the most degraded Roman Catholic countries; under whose baleful influence and operation the best of Christians must carefully conceal their religious sentiments, if they do not go the length of practising the base hypocrisy openly to deny them. Let us take care, lest, by our silence, or tame

submission to the projects of designing and arrogant men, we do not countenance the introduction among ourselves, of a system of spiritual domination, which shall be productive of effects, if not to the same extent, certainly of the very same description.

We have the happiness to live under a mild, a tolerant, and paternal civil government;—a government which is so far from trenching on any of our religious liberties, that it has amply secured those liberties, and protected us in the enjoyment of them. We have, therefore, nothing of this kind to fear, save from an arrogant and unchristian spirit among ourselves. And if that spirit should unhappily be allowed to gain an ascendancy in our church, one of the immediate consequences will be, that we shall no longer be content with the scriptures as our rule of faith; but will set about to establish a human criterion of orthodoxy, to which the divine rule must become second and subordinate. To this yoke must all candidates for the sacred office of the Christian ministry among us bow their necks. If any of them should entertain a scruple upon any point of speculative or controverted theology embraced in those formularies, they will decline subscription, if they are honest men. But they will not decline it, even in these circumstances, should they happen to be persons of a different character.

Thus, at the very entrance to the ministry of the Christian church, honest, conscientious men may be shut out; and men who may be neither, will, without scruple, gain admittance. If a candidate for the sacred office conscientiously subscribe to this human test of faith, what effect is it likely to have on him? It is evident that he must thenceforward feel himself under the temptation either to check all inquiry beyond the prescribed boundary of his avowed creed; or, if he should be prompted by curiosity, a natural and laudable curiosity, to consult the scriptures for himself, and find that any portion of his avowed creed is inconsistent with scripture—to keep his sentiments to himself, however important he may think them;—or if he do not possess more firmness than men commonly do, even to go the length of disavowing them!—Human nature is encompassed with many weaknesses. The ministers of religion are not exempted from those weaknesses. They are but men, subject to the like infirmity with others; and there should be no such stumbling-blocks of temptation systematically placed in their way.

And I here put to you, as a Christian people, a people valuing the truth of the gospel as it is in itself, greatly beyond all the glosses and interpretations which men have ever put on it,—whether you could wish that your future ministers should come into the church of Christ with

the yoke of human authority about their necks, and bound down thereby to the maintenance of certain doctrines, whether they may find them in scripture or not; or that they should come into this pulpit in the full enjoyment of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, the blessed liberty of taking their creed from the Bible only—the liberty of declaring to you, unshackled, “the whole counsel of God,” so far as they know it; the liberty of putting you, from time to time, in possession of “the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you,” just as they find it disclosed in the volume of divine revelation.

Your present minister values this inestimable liberty beyond all price. Allowed, as he has been, “to be put in trust with the gospel,” he esteems himself happy that he has it in his power to submit the truths and the treasures thereof to your minds, uninfluenced by any other restraints than those of unerring wisdom. He thanks God he has never been bound to any creed but the Bible. He conceives it his bounden duty to search the scriptures for himself; and to collect the principles of the Christian faith, and the particulars of Christian duty, from that pure source; and whatever he believes in his heart and conscience to be the teaching of the word and spirit of God, he has had the sincerest pleasure in communicating to his beloved hearers, in all

plainness and simplicity of language; and it is his fixed purpose, with the blessing of God, to continue to do so, uninfluenced either by the fear or the favour of man, so long as he lives. In this way, and in this way only, can the instructions and the services of your pastor come to you, and be valued by you, as the ready, cordial, unconstrained offering of "Christ's free man;"—in any other way, they may lie under the suspicion of being nothing better than the unwilling, the dastardly, the crouching servilities of a slave.

In the whole of these observations on the discipline of the several churches, as it regards the admission of candidates into the ministry of the gospel, and the manner in which it may be supposed to influence their conduct in the discharge of their pastoral duty, I have gone upon the assumption, that in all matters of faith, and especially in things essential to salvation, the written word of God is a sufficient and a perfect rule. In this sentiment, I presume, you will readily agree with me, taught and accustomed, as you have been, to regard the holy scriptures with the utmost reverence, as paramount to all other authority. For, suppose we entertain a different sentiment on the subject; suppose we take it into our heads to believe that the scripture is not a sufficient rule;—then are we pushed at once to this alternative, either to supply the

deficiency, as the Roman Catholics do, by the aid of tradition, and the authority of an infallible church; or to have recourse, as enthusiasts, to certain workings of a fanciful or fanatical mind, which have not unfrequently been mistaken for the illumination of the Spirit of God.

The illumination of the Spirit of God is promised in the gospel, and is certainly "given to them that ask it;" but not as a rule supplementary to the scriptures. The extent of his blessed aid is ordinarily nothing more, so far as faith alone is concerned, than that of opening our minds to understand and believe the scriptures. It does not seem to belong to his gracious office to add to, or enlarge the rule of scripture; but if we seek his holy guidance as we ought, we have the promise of our Saviour, that this blessed Spirit will "lead us into all necessary truth;" that "he will take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us;" that he will "teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance,"—whatsoever Christ and his inspired Apostles have taught us. And as it does not seem to belong to the office of the Holy Spirit to add to the express rule of divine revelation; still more certainly may we conclude that nothing can come from him to contradict that rule. As the whole of that rule came through his divine inspiration, it is not for us to suppose that any doctrine can proceed from him, by whomsoever, or

with what gravity soever, it may be delivered, which militates against the teaching of the scriptures.

It has been no unusual thing—it is not very unusual yet—for men to advance doctrines as a necessary part of Christianity, which yet are not to be found in the Bible : it is no unusual thing for men to advance such doctrines, and to lay the greatest possible stress upon them ; and to tell you, that if you do not believe them, there is no salvation for you. And if you hesitate to receive them as essential to salvation, you are set down at once as an unbeliever. You are told that the “ natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” But if any man will tell me that those things, which he chooses to add to the teaching of divine revelation, “ are the things of the Spirit of God ;” I will tell him that I regard them as the things of his own spirit, as the creations of his own fancy, the wanderings of his own imagination. And I shall no more give up the plain teaching of scripture, to follow his hallucinations, than I should think of preferring the flickerings of an *ignis fatuus*, to the blessed light of the noon-day sun.

To believe that the Bible is a divine revelation to man, and yet to suppose that it is not a perfect rule of faith and practice, is offering a gross insult to the divine wisdom and goodness which gave it : for it is, in effect, a declaration that this holy book must fail to answer the high pur-

poses for which the Almighty designed it; that the Holy Scriptures are not “able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus.” It is surprising that a Christian mind should entertain such a sentiment, in defiance of so many plain and positive declarations of scripture itself.

See with what caution the divine law was guarded from innovation under the Old Testament economy. Thus saith the Lord, by his servant Moses—Deut. iv. 2, “*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it.*” To his servant Joshua, he saith—Josh. i. 7, “Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to the law which Moses, my servant, commanded thee: *turn not from it to the right hand or the left*, that thou mayest prosper.” “The law of the Lord,” said David, “*is perfect*, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” “*Add thou not unto his words*, saith the wise man, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

See, too, with what caution the Christian revelation is guarded from the unhallowed interference of human authority. In matters of faith we are to “call *no man master*; because *one is our master, even Christ.*” The very design of the gospel was to lead us into the full knowledge

and firm belief of those things that concern our eternal peace. "These things are written," saith the evangelist John, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of," saith Paul to Timothy, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which *are able to make thee wise unto salvation*, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God *may be perfect, thoroughly furnished* unto all good works." And the canon of scripture is closed with these awful words of our Lord Jesus Christ—"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book—if any man *shall add unto these things*, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any shall *take away* from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

You see then, that holy scripture has amply declared itself to be a sufficient and perfect rule in those things which concern our eternal salvation; and whosoever consults it with reverence and attention, will find that it is also a plain and

intelligible rule; so much so, that “he who runneth may read,” and understand.

It is not to be denied, that in scripture we shall find difficulties which we cannot solve, and depths which we are unable to fathom. But these do not belong to the essence of faith; the understanding of these is not necessary to salvation. If this were the case, how melancholy must our condition be!—and who might hope to be saved? We know, that we are required, in order to our salvation, to believe and obey the gospel; but if the essential doctrines of the gospel were involved in obscurity, and beyond the reach of common understandings, how should Christians generally be able to acquire the knowledge of salvation? Or where would be the obligation to belief or obedience? But, blessed be God, the circumstances of the case are far otherwise. In all things necessary, an honest mind will find little difficulty in scripture. Councils and fathers, and traditional creeds, have contributed much to throw an obscurity over the doctrine of the gospel, and to darken and disturb the minds of many sincere Christians. But those who attentively look into the perfect law of liberty—the gospel of Christ,—and are resolved through divine grace, to “continue therein,” and to take the principles of their faith from that pure source—will find, that, in those things which belong to their eternal peace, there is *there* no obscurity; and that the way of

life is so plainly opened up, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

It is, therefore, made the bounden duty of all Christians to read and study the word of God for their own information, and not to put a blind and implicit trust in the representations of fallible men. Even when the inspired Apostles of Christ delivered his doctrine, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," those who heard them were applauded for "searching the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." And accordingly, we find that Christians are every where exhorted, and commanded, to "beware of false teachers;" to "believe not every spirit;" but to "try the spirits, whether they be of God;" to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." And by what rule is this to be done? Certainly not by the decrees and decisions of fallible men, but by the unerring and unchangeable rule of the word of God. And, that we may become sufficiently acquainted with that rule, and capable of applying it to good purpose, it is indispensably necessary that we study it with diligence and impartiality; and that we study it as a whole, not resting our faith on mere fragments of scripture, but on the broad basis of divine revelation.

Among the best helps to the study and understanding of holy scripture, I shall not refer you to commentators and expositors; still less, to the writings of avowed controversialists. I have

seldom met with any of these, who do not more or less distort the scripture from its genuine meaning, and turn it aside to serve their own purposes. But I shall refer you to the three following rules, which are easily understood, and not impracticable to any one of common understanding, and an honest heart.

In the first place, be careful, in the study of scripture, to set your mind as free as the grace of God will enable you, from the influence of prepossession and prejudice, that you may be disposed to "receive the word with all readiness of mind." For surely we ought not to come to the scriptures, merely with a view to receive confirmation in those doctrines which we have previously embraced; but with the sincere desire of learning, at large, what is "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us." If this latter be indeed our design, then we shall take the entire word of God as our basis and rule;—if the former, we are almost certain to acquiesce in a few broken and disjointed declarations.

In the second place, be careful, in the study of scripture, to discover the scope and intention of the speaker or writer whom you consult. And this, generally speaking, will not be found a difficult task—if you give due attention, not merely to the words of a particular passage, but also to what has introduced them, and what follows; taking them in connexion with parallel passages of scripture, and "comparing spiritual

things with spiritual." You will find that there is no safer or more satisfactory expositor of scripture, than scripture itself; and you may rest assured, that the Holy Spirit is his own best interpreter.

And in the third place, be careful in the study of scripture, with all humility and earnestness, to seek the blessing of God, and the guidance of his Holy Spirit, upon all your inquiries, and all your endeavours to become wiser and better; sincerely desirous to become acquainted with the will of God; unreservedly acquiescing in it when known, and truly resolved to yield yourselves thereunto, by the grace of God, both in faith and practice.

Whoever consulteth the holy scriptures according to these rules, will not be suffered to fall into any error in doctrine that shall endanger his salvation. For so long as we are distinctly instructed in the divine word,—“If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him:” so long as we have the express promise of our blessed Saviour, that “if any man shall do his will, he shall know of his doctrine:”—so long as we have, from the same Saviour, the gracious assurance, that “our heavenly Father will surely give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” would it be any thing less than blasphemy to suppose that the sincere, humble follower of Christ, who honestly seeks to know his Master’s

will, who diligently searches his holy word, and who searches it in a believing dependence on the Spirit of light and truth, should fail to obtain all knowledge, and all faith, necessary to the salvation of his soul? Let no sentiment so derogatory to the wisdom, and the goodness, and the truth of God, ever find a resting place in our hearts.

From the views which have been laid down of the sufficiency and perfection of holy scripture, as the rule of Christian faith and practice, you will, I am persuaded, suffer the word of exhortation.

In the first place, then, be entreated, as you value the interests of truth, and the salvation of your own souls, to devote a due time and attention to the study of your Bible; and, turning away with merited neglect from all the decisions of human authority, to rest your Christian principles exclusively on the Christian scriptures. It was a sentiment worthy of the renowned Chillingworth, worthy of a Protestant Christian, that "the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." It has never been well with the Christian world, since so many other standards of faith have been erected—used, as they too often are, for rallying points to some of the worst passions of human nature. And it is likely never to be as it ought to be with the Christian world, until in God's good time, these standards shall be laid aside,

and replaced by the Bible ; for the Bible is the only true centre of Christian unity.

Be persuaded, my dear brethren, so far as relates to the principles and rules of your religion, to have recourse to your Bible only. The truth which is there disclosed, undoubtedly merits, and should engage, your most serious regards. And as all truth necessary to your faith and salvation is certainly to be found in the holy scriptures, you should make it matter of conscience, as it is of duty, to have your minds open to the evidence of gospel truth ; and always ready to embrace that truth, whatever prejudices, whatever difficulties, whatever temporal interests, may stand in the way.

You may be persuaded, that as the gospel presents all necessary truth to the mind, so the truth which it does present can do no injury to those who embrace it. The only injury that can be sustained, with reference to gospel truth, must arise from refusing to embrace it ; for which indeed there can be no apology whatsoever. The truth of the gospel will be so far from injuring you, that, on the contrary, it will be of the utmost importance and comfort to you. It will, under God, be the happy means of shielding you from the shafts of error, levelled at you from other quarters. It will contribute most effectually, through divine grace, to fortify both your understandings and your hearts against the wanderings and delusions of the mistaken enthusiast on the one

side, and against the tricks and insinuations of the designing impostor on the other.

Learn then, brethren, to value the holy scriptures, especially the New Testament, incomparably beyond all other books in the world; and labour to possess yourselves of the heavenly treasures it contains. Let it be the stay and comfort of your hearts to delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein day and night; and you will put little comparative value on the best writings of uninspired men. You will never once think of resting your faith, or any article of it, upon them. And here, I will offer you an advice, which is the result of experience; and will probably accord with your own. Do not keep your minds balancing and vacillating among books of controversial theology. I know none of them that I should much recommend to your attention. I know few of them that have any pretensions to fairness or candour. They keep the mind in suspense. They seldom lead to an honest decision, or a comfortable conviction. I fear they have no good effect on the heart, at best; and it is notorious that they often gender strife, rather than minister to godly edifying. The world is too full of books of bitter controversy. It will be your wisdom to throw them aside, and turn to that blessed book, which has God for its author, which has truth for its contents, and which breathes the spirit of love in every line. Let that sacred volume be your

counsellor, your comforter, and the guide of your whole conduct. It will convince you of your ruined condition through sin. It will impart to you a just knowledge of the only Saviour. It will show you the redemption that is in Christ. It will lead you to lay hold on that redemption with all gratitude and gladness. It will teach you to walk as becometh the hope of the gospel, in all holiness and godly conversation. It will be the strength and the solace of your hearts, through all the trials and vicissitudes of the present life; and it will at length, through the mercy of God, the merits of your Saviour, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, conduct you into those mansions of peace and rest, where there shall be fulness of joy and rejoicing, at God's right hand, for evermore.

And here I desire to offer you a farther counsel,—that, as the professing subjects of the Prince of Peace, you cultivate a spirit of peace on earth, and good will to all mankind. Whilst you reckon it your privilege and your duty to exercise the right of private judgment, in collecting your religion from the Bible; whilst you proceed upon the broad principle, “that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind,” and “stand fast in the precious liberty with which Christ hath made him free;”—you will, I trust, be ever ready to concede to others the same rights and privileges which you exercise for yourselves. Amidst the diversity of

sentiments which have prevailed, and may be expected to prevail, on certain difficult points, let every Christian judge for himself; and, with the enlarged benevolence of a Christian, leave others to do the same. As all the subjects of Christ's kingdom are equally entitled to the free and unmolested profession of those religious principles which they find in the Bible, so it is the unquestionable duty of all to cherish towards any of their brethren who differ from them, that forbearance and charity which the gospel so specially recommends, and which will be found to form the strongest and the best bond of union among Christians.

The spirit of Christianity, where it has thoroughly taken possession of the heart, is large, and liberal, and unconfined; and will not fail to counteract and subdue every thing little, and narrow, and uncharitable. Let this blessed spirit get possession of your hearts, my beloved brethren, and it will cause you to adorn the doctrine of your divine Master. It will lead you to honour all men, as members of the great family of God. It will induce you to treat your fellow-Christians, notwithstanding some diversity of opinion, not merely as children of the same Father, but as disciples of the same Saviour, with all kindness and tenderness of affection. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from among you, with all malice; and be ye kind to

one another, and tender-hearted, forbearing and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." And where difference of sentiment may obtain, wider than any that can subsist among the disciples of Christ, remember that, even then, "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment and belief of the truth."

Finally, brethren—the exhortations which I have taken the liberty of addressing to you, it is my sincere design, with God's blessing, to make the rule of my own religious conduct. Regarding the Bible as a revelation from heaven, and as containing in full purity and perfection the principles of Christianity, it is my resolution to make it the study of my life. Whatever doctrines and rules I find there, I purpose to embrace for myself, and with my best ability to teach and communicate to others. What I cannot find there, I will neither profess, nor teach, for any temporal consideration whatsoever. And from this determination, through the assistance of my God, no man, no body of men, shall either allure or frighten me. I shall call no man master of my faith or conscience; nor shall I ever be terrified, by the face of man, from declaring what I believe to be the truth of God. Neither do I claim any authority over the faith

or conscience of others. But as I am allowed to be put in trust with the gospel, I reckon it my duty to state to you the truth, so far as I am able, plainly, sincerely, and without reserve, in the reasonable confidence that you, on your part, are disposed, with all readiness of mind, to receive the truth in the love of it. Standing fast in the liberty of the gospel, I shall ever, I trust, be free to cultivate the spirit of the gospel. I shall endeavour, by God's grace, to live in peace and friendship with all my fellow-Christians, of every denomination. I would not willingly disturb, or displease, any human being. And if any choose to be displeased with me for the honest avowal of Christian truth, I shall be sorry for it; but I shall not sink under their displeasure. If I can but secure the approbation of God, and of my own conscience, I must learn to sit easy under the censure of man, whose breath is in his nostrils; who shall soon return to his dust; and, like myself, stand before the judgment seat of Christ, where we shall both meet with justice and with mercy.

It is my design, God willing, on the next Lord's day, to address you generally on the scripture terms of Christian communion. When I have done so, I shall have finished the series of discourses which I proposed; wherein I have calmly stated what I believe to be the truth; but wherein I neither had, nor wished to have, a word of controversy with any one. And I hope thence

forward to return to that quiet and unobtrusive ministration of the gospel, which I heretofore pursued, and which is much more congenial to the disposition of my mind. “Now the God of patience and consolation grant us all to be like-minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that we may all, with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Grant this, O Father, for Christ’s sake, and glory be to thy name for ever. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE SCRIPTURE TERMS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

EPHESIANS, iv. 1, 2, 3.

“I, therefore, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”

IN my last discourse, I addressed you generally on the sufficiency and perfection of the holy scriptures, as the rule of Christian faith and practice. I then offered you an exhortation, which cannot be too much, or too earnestly pressed upon the minds of those who desire to know and believe the truth as it is in Jesus,—to turn away from the conflicting opinions and decisions of mortal men, and to consult, with reverence, with impartiality, and with prayer, the “lively oracles of God,” as containing all knowledge necessary

to salvation—the holy scriptures, which are given by inspiration of God, and are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

In all those concerns which belong to your eternal peace, which affect the salvation of your souls, and your hope of heavenly glory, the gospel revelation should be your sole and single rule, as Christ is your one Master, your only Lawgiver, Saviour, and Judge. It is, therefore, your bounden duty, as it is mine, to refuse subjection to any other authority, in sacred things; and to take your religion, both faith and practice, immediately and exclusively from the Bible. Leave a blind and bigotted submission to human authority, to those who choose it. But remember that you must stand accountable for the opportunities, and the means of knowledge, which God has put into your hands: and if, favoured as you are by the light of divine revelation, you shut your eyes against that light, and remain in darkness, how do you stand acquitted at the bar of your own conscience? How shall you stand acquitted at the tribunal of your Judge? You possess the means of knowledge, which unerring wisdom has afforded; you are often and earnestly urged, by every motive, to avail yourselves of those means; and if you ultimately suffer by your neglect of them, it will be but the

ratification of the scripture, which tells you, "This is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, but men have loved darkness rather than light." God of his mercy forbid, that this should be the condemnation of any, my dear brethren, among you.

But, whilst reading and studying the scriptures, with humble and teachable minds, and with earnest prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit, is undoubtedly the direct and most effectual way to gain a competent knowledge and belief of all truth necessary to salvation, it is not to be expected that there should be a complete uniformity of sentiment on all points connected with the Christian revelation. Such uniformity of sentiment is a chimera which has been often and anxiously attempted, but never has been, never will, in this life, be attained.

The nearest approaches to any such uniformity, have obtained, undoubtedly, in those churches and communities where Christians have not been permitted to see with their own eyes, or judge according to the conviction of their own understandings, and where the minds of men have been bound down, and loaded, with the heavy chains of spiritual slavery. *There*, there has been something like uniformity; but it is the uniformity of mental darkness—it is the wide-spreading stupor of a spiritual lethargy—it is the stillness of intellectual death. Where Christians are in possession of their rights, and have learn-

ed to exercise them; where they are in the habit of looking into "the perfect law of liberty" for themselves, and collecting the blessed truths which are there disclosed for their own information—it may be expected that all honest inquirers should generally agree in the great and essential doctrines of the Christian faith. And I am satisfied that there is a much more general agreement about them, among such as consult the gospel of Christ for themselves, than may be commonly thought. But it is no more to be expected, that there should be a perfect uniformity among us in all the shadings of religious opinion, than that there should be a perfect similarity in all the features of our faces. The endless variety of feature is a striking proof of the great Creator's wisdom, and serves many valuable purposes in life; and yet we all possess the human face divine. We do not know that a similar variety of shading in religious opinion may not be made, by the same unerring wisdom, to subserve the great interests of Christianity: whilst, notwithstanding such variety, all humble and honest believers in Christ may fairly be regarded as sincere Christians.

It is indeed desirable, so far as it is attainable, that the disciples of Christ should feel it their duty to walk by the same rule; and that, in all weighty and essential doctrines, they should be, as the Apostle counsels, "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judg-

ment." But it never could have been contemplated that this perfect unison of mind and judgment among Christians should extend to all points, whether important or not, whether plainly revealed or not : for, in point of fact, there never has been any such uniformity in the Christian world. For my own part, I cannot say that I have ever met with any two minds that were perfectly uniform in all their religious views ; although I have met with multitudes sufficiently so, for all the purposes of Christian fellowship.

And here, I will state to you, in a few words, what I take to constitute a Christian ; and consequently what, in my judgment, entitles him to Christian communion. Whosoever sincerely believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world, who shed his blood for the remission of sins ;—whosoever is truly willing to come to God, through the mediation of that divine Saviour ;—whosoever accepteth salvation through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, by whom we have now received the atonement, looking for the mercy of God as manifested in that Saviour ;—whosoever regards the Bible as a revelation of the will of God to man, taking it accordingly as his sufficient rule ;—whosoever earnestly and habitually seeks the guidance and the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the sincere desire to understand, believe, and obey, the will of God from the heart ;—that man I regard as a Christian ; that man I love as a brother ; and to

that man, however he may differ from me in other things, I am not only willing, but I shall be delighted, to offer the hand of Christian fellowship.

I know that the narrow, sectarian spirit, which has been, and still is, too prevalent among professing Christians, will sit in severe judgment on this declaration. I know that the same unchristian spirit, which prompted some in the primitive church to say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ," will prompt certain in the present day to bestow upon me some opprobrious names, some term of vulgar reproach, which it is hoped may render me the object of popular odium. I know that the same dividing and schismatic spirit has, in various churches, set up human creeds and conditions of church fellowship; and continues to insist on terms of Christian communion, which never were required by our Lord Jesus Christ, or his inspired Apostles. But, from amongst the partition walls, and exclusive opinions, and conflicting requirements, of the several sects and parties, it is our duty to retire to the plain and certain rule of the gospel of Christ. There we shall find all the information we need on the important subject of church fellowship; and thence alone let us take our measures for regulating all the terms of Christian communion. For this purpose, let us here attend, with all seriousness, to a few portions of the holy scripture, which

bear either generally, or specially, on the subject before us.

Read first a part of the epistle to the Romans, fourteenth chapter, from the beginning. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The case here treated of was that of the members of the same Christian church entertaining different views on certain religious questions, and quarreling about them with the same mistaken zeal, which has been so often exemplified since; sitting in judgment on one another, and possibly consigning one another to everlasting perdition. How does St. Paul set about to calm this turbulent spirit, and to preserve among them the harmony of Christian fellowship? Not by the mandate of apostolical authority; not by setting up one to judge for another; but by teaching them that they were each accountable to one master; that they were equally entitled, as his servants, to judge for

themselves; and that, whilst every man should be “fully persuaded in his own mind,” they should receive one another—“but not to doubtful disputations.” Here, then, is a plain exhibition of the true apostolic principles and rules of church fellowship.—And, a few verses after, St. Paul enforces these principles in the following words: “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother’s way.” Considerations these, which ought to weigh, and will weigh, with every sincere Christian, with every tender conscience.

At the seventeenth verse of this chapter, the Apostle, pursuing the same subject, and the same exhortation upon it, observes—“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” Here we are taught that the kingdom of God, the dispensation of the gospel, does not concern itself with the regulation of meats and drinks, about which a troublesome question then arose, and was keenly and uncharitably

contested by the zealots of the day; but that the great object which it has specially in view is, to promote "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;"—righteousness towards God, the spirit of peace and charity among men, and the rejoicing of a good conscience through the aid of the Holy Spirit. We are farther taught here, that whosoever, in these great and essential things, faithfully serveth the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, is acceptable to God; is received into the divine favour and love; should obtain the approbation of men, and do obtain the approbation of good men. "Let us, therefore," adds the Apostle, "follow after the things which make for peace,"—the things which I have specified to you, and which are evidently the great ends of the gospel dispensation; "and things wherewith one may edify another,"—things whereby we may contribute to build up one another in our most holy faith, and in obedience thereto; that so we may ultimately obtain that which is "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls."

The same interesting subject is followed up, and brought more closely home to our present purpose, in the following chapter, (Romans, xv.) "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; for even Christ pleased not himself. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another, according

to Christ Jesus ; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." In these passages the Apostle urges the observance of his liberal and charitable rule, by the example of Christ himself. His argument is plainly this. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, has received us who believe in his name, into his tender regard ; into the communion of his church ; into fellowship with himself ; he has done so "to the glory of God." And why should not we, who believe in Christ, receive one another to the same high end, "the glory of God?" Why should not we receive one another, notwithstanding some diversity of sentiment, into habits of friendly intercourse—into the mutual exercise of the kindest affection—into the arms of Christian fellowship and communion? The apostolic instruction, delivered here, distinctly throws the charge of heresy and schism upon those who unnecessarily break up the communion of the Christian church; and is sufficient to show that, whatever the pretence, such persons have no true regard to the glory of God.

These now are the general principles inculcated by the inspired Apostles of Christ, when they gave express instructions to the primitive disciples, in reference to church fellowship and Christian communion. And we see nothing here

of that sectarian, dividing, and exclusive spirit, which soon began to manifest itself among the professing followers of Christ, and has continued so lamentably to the present day. We find nothing here of those narrow and uncharitable terms of communion, nothing of those confounding formularies of dark and difficult doctrine, by which modern sectarianism thinks it necessary to guard and circumscribe the fellowship of Christians. Here, the sincere disciples of Christ were taught, after the example of their great Master, to bear with each other's weaknesses and differences on doubtful points; and mutually to cultivate the generous, the self-denying, the liberal and affectionate spirit of the gospel.

But was there no profession of faith necessary in the primitive and apostolic churches? There was;—and I will now proceed to show you, from the inspired records, wherein that profession consisted.

In looking through the New Testament writings, it will be found, that nothing more was required of those who desired admittance into the Christian church, than openly to profess their belief that *Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world*, or some similar form of expression. By this open avowal, they professed to receive Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King—as their Lord and Saviour, their Lawgiver and Judge: and to hold themselves obliged to the sincere observance of

his laws. Upon this profession they were admitted into the Church; and, unless there was something found in them to discredit that profession, they continued in the fellowship of the church, and in the communion of the faithful, all their days.

Let us now examine the particular cases, recorded in the New Testament, on which this general doctrine is founded.

In the gospel of St. Matthew, xvi. 18, we hear our Lord Jesus declaring, that upon the acknowledgment of this truth, that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” he would build his church. He had just heard from the disciples the prevailing opinions among men respecting himself; and he asked them, “But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered, and said, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And Jesus answered, and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, *and upon this rock* (upon this confession which thou hast made,) *I will build my church*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” And though the church may be said to be “built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles;” yet, that our Lord did not mean to say that he would build his church upon Peter himself, but upon Peter’s confession, that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of

the living God," is manifest from the fact, that this is the confession upon which the primitive Christian church was collected, and members uniformly admitted to her communion.

When believers were added to the Lord, what do we find to be their usual declarations? I will give you a few examples of it from scripture.—When many of the Samaritans believed on him, they "said unto the woman (of Samaria) now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is *indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*"

When Jesus, near the tomb of Lazarus, declared himself "the resurrection and the life," he asked Martha, "believest thou this? She saith unto him, yea, Lord, *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*"

This too was the confession which entitled the Ethiopian eunuch to the rite of Christian baptism at the hand of Philip. For when this treasurer of Queen Candace requested to be admitted a disciple of Christ by baptism, saying, "Sir, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" Upon which Philip baptized him; and he went on his way rejoicing.

To establish the truth contained in this confession is the declared object of the evangelical

writings :—“ These things are written,” saith the evangelist John, xx. 31, “ that ye might believe *that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God* ; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.”

This was as evidently the scope and object of the apostolic preaching also.—When Saul was miraculously converted to the Christian faith, “ he straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, *that he is the Son of God*. And confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that *this is very Christ*.”

When the same Apostle came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews, as his manner was, he “ went in unto them ; and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures ; opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, *is Christ*.”

“ Whosoever believeth *that Jesus is the Christ*,” saith the Apostle John, “ is born of God.” And “ who is he that overcometh the world,” saith the same Apostle, “ but he that believeth that *Jesus is the Son of God* ?”

We need not multiply examples to prove what you must all know, that, as the declaration of this truth—that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world—was the scope and burthen of evangelical and apostolic instruction ; so, the open avowal of this great truth, was the footing on which believers were received into the com-

munion and fellowship of the Christian church. And the confession of this truth cannot be considered as binding them either to believe any doctrine, or to observe any precept, but such as came with the authority of their one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it must be understood as obliging them to the belief and obedience of the doctrine of Christ, duly authenticated :—that is, to take the Holy Scriptures as the sole rule of their faith and practice. And why should the followers of Christ now, more than then, be obliged to any thing beyond a sincere desire and endeavour, through the grace of God, to conform themselves as closely as possible, both in faith and practice, to the Christian scriptures, as being the confessed and only proper standard of both? In fixing the terms of church fellowship and Christian communion, it appears to me that this is the one safe and satisfactory rule; and that the nearer we can approach to this rule, the more conformed are we to the example of the purest primitive Christian churches.

There is no question, that any gross violation of, any wilful departure from, the clear and undoubted principles and rules of Christianity, should exclude the guilty individual from the fellowship of the church; but the decision of the church, in such cases, should rest exclusively upon the Holy Scriptures. And there can be as little question, that such exclusion should continue until, in the judgment of charity, the of-

fender shall have exhibited genuine tokens of repentance and amendment; but in the formation of that judgment also, scripture alone ought to be the rule.

And we have in the apostolic writings various special instructions and instances of the application of this rule of discipline in reference to Christian communion, and of the spirit in which it ought to be applied. Let us attend to a few examples of this description.

“Brethren, (saith Paul to the Galatian church,) if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” The case here supposed is not that of a person guilty of deliberate, wilful, continued transgression, but of a person surprised, as it were, into a fault, by the power of temptation. And they who are spiritual, who possess the spirit of the gospel, are enjoined to labour, “in the spirit of meekness,” to restore such an one to the path of Christian duty, and accordingly to the comfort and advantages of Christian communion.

Where the offence was one of deep moral turpitude, and great scandal to the church, we find the same apostle giving very different instructions about the treatment of the offender. Thus to the Corinthian church he says,—(1 Cor. v. 11,) “But now I have written unto you, not to keep company if any man that is called a brother

be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat." And if this be meant of a common table, the rule will surely apply much more strongly to the table of the Lord.

In the same chapter, the Apostle refers to a case of most shameful incest which had taken place among them, which he says was "not so much as named among the Gentiles." And he proceeds to give them express instructions how to deal with such an offender. "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed;—in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Of the same character are St. Paul's words to Timothy, when he commits to him the charge of the gospel ministry,—instructing him (1 Tim. i. 19,) to "hold faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom," adds the Apostle, "is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Here again were such examples of gross immorality—*blasphemy, putting*

away a good conscience, and consequently *making shipwreck of faith*—as were totally inconsistent with the profession of Christianity, and could not be retained in the Christian church.

The expression, in both these instances, of “delivering them unto Satan,” may be understood either of subjecting them to bodily diseases, through the agency of evil spirits, over whom the Apostles had power; or in a more general view, of handing them over, or declaring them to belong, to the kingdom of Satan, as opposed to the kingdom of God in the dispensation of the gospel. And here, by the way, we may learn, that he who parts with a good conscience, is not likely long to “keep the faith.” But if any man will subscribe what he does not believe, he has thereby put away a good conscience; and must, of course, make shipwreck of faith; and therefore no man of good conscience, or of Christian sincerity, should require such subscription of others, beyond the express teaching of holy scripture.

Of the instances recorded, and the descriptions given, of those who at that time thus made shipwreck of the faith, I will now adduce two or three examples from the apostolic writings.

“But shun profane and vain babblers,” saith Paul to Timothy, “for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenæus and Philletus, who concerning the truth have erred, say-

ing that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." "There shall be false teachers among you," saith the Apostle Peter, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you."

Now these, and such as these, were the persons from whom the primitive Christians were exhorted to "turn away:"—these, and such as these, were the heretics they were taught to reject—"unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, who subverted whole houses; teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake:"—these were the men who *then* made the Christian religion the instrument of their corrupt and selfish propensities; and who, by taking advantage of the weakness and prejudices of some, and by misrepresenting the conduct and principles of others, contrived to set Christians by

the ears, and to create divisions and scandals in the Christian church. And if there be any “vain deceivers,” “men of corrupt minds,” who are following the same vile practices *now*, “for filthy lucre’s sake,” they ought, by the same rule, to be carefully avoided, by all who wish well to the peace and the purity of the church of Christ.

I have now submitted to you the general rules of scripture discipline, designed to regulate the terms of church fellowship and Christian communion; together with a few examples of the primitive and apostolic application of those rules. And one would think that these rules, applied in the spirit of Christian truth and sincerity, Christian tenderness and charity, might be amply sufficient for regulating every act and instance of Christian fellowship.

Let us, my beloved brethren, as becometh the professing followers of Christ, learn to study, and, by the grace of God, to carry into practice, these important principles. Let us remember that, as the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, we “must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

In all cases of private individual offence, it is our duty to act upon the rule of our blessed Saviour—“If thy brother trespass against thee, go

and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

In all our public deliberations, decisions, and acts, as a church of Christ, regulating the concerns of Christian communion, let us desire ever to be guided by that spirit of truth and tenderness, which the gospel breathes throughout. In any case of public scandal, or gross immorality, we are bound to exclude the offender from the fellowship of the church, until there be tokens of manifest repentance and amendment. When any of our brethren may be *overtaken* in a fault, from the possibility of which none are exempted, it is our duty to "restore such, in the spirit of Christian meekness" and humility. It is our duty humbly to imitate the example of him, who would "not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;" who would "not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." It is our duty to "receive one another, even as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God." It is our duty to bear with each other's weakness and infirmity, and involuntary diversity of sentiment on points which do not affect

the essence of faith, or the hope of salvation. It is our duty, as a church, to "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from us, with all malice ; and to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." It is our duty, as a church "putting away lying, to speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another ;" and to "follow the things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify another : " that thus, "speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Then shall we regulate our Christian fellowship according to the Apostle's exhortation in the text—"I, therefore, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Let other churches, if they please, surround themselves by fences unknown to the gospel. Let them, if they please, prescribe conditions of fellowship which neither Christ nor his Apostles ever thought of. Let them put forth their human creeds and confessions of faith ; and pronounce their anathemas, if they please, against all who do not receive them as they do. Let them say, "Stand by thyself : come not near to

me; for I am holier than thou." Let them thus shut out of the pale of their communion such as may be sincere, humble, conscientious believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.—But let it ever be our care to regulate the terms of Christian communion by the rule of the Christian scriptures. And whosoever is willing to walk by the same rule;—whosoever takes the scriptures as his guide in principle and practice; sincerely desirous, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to understand, believe, and obey them;—whosoever declares his acceptance of eternal life, as "the gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,"—believing that the Son of God laid down his life for sinners; that he shed his blood for the remission of sin; that he suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God;—and whosoever is, in consequence, constrained by the love of Christ to live not unto himself, but "unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;"—in whomsoever these things meet,—let us regard that man as a Christian. Let us take him into the bosom of our affections, as a brother in Christ. Let us look upon him as one with ourselves, and as a member of that body, of which Christ Jesus is the head. Worshipping the same God, through the mediation of the same divine Saviour; being a temple of the same Holy Spirit; seeking the same glorious immortality; an heir of the same blessed hope through

Christ,—let us feel, that as he was washed in the same baptism, so is he equally entitled to sit down at the same communion table with ourselves. Looking upon him as a sincere believer in Christ the Lord, as an humble follower of the Lamb of God—whatever his views may be touching certain doubtful and controverted points of theology, on which the best of Christians have had, and will continue to have, a diversity of sentiment; let us ever stand ready to receive him, “as Christ hath received us, to the glory of God.” And if such an one desire to cast in his lot among us, and to join with us in the fellowship and communion of the church of Christ, let us say to him, as Laban said to Abraham’s servant, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?”

If Christians, and Christian churches, could but be persuaded to walk by this rule, what a blessed tendency would it have, not only to give glory to God in the highest, but also to promote the spirit of peace on earth, and good will among men. The church here below would be brought to a nearer resemblance to the general assembly and church of the first born above,—wherein universal love, and concord, and joy, shall reign for ever. To that assembly of glorified spirits all the followers of the Lamb shall in due time be united; and there, it may be hoped, attain to that perfect uniformity of knowledge in divine things, which cannot be expected here.

I shall conclude, brethren, with a word of exhortation. Whilst we are careful to rest the principles of our faith exclusively on the gospel of Christ, and to regulate the terms of our Christian fellowship by the same unerring rule, let us ever be careful, through the grace of God, individually and collectively, to adorn the doctrine of our divine Master by a life and conversation becoming the gospel. Let our faith in Christ our blessed Redeemer evidence its truth and reality, in “working by love,” in “purifying the heart,” and in “overcoming the world.” Let the true principles of the gospel, love to God, love to one another, be manifest in our general deportment. And, “laying aside every weight, and the sins which so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

In this course our best interests are safe. In this way we may, it is true, fail to obtain the approbation of frail, perishing man; but we shall infallibly secure the favour of Him, whose love is better than life; and at whose right hand there shall be fulness of joy, and pleasures evermore. Which may God of his mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE MOTIVES, MEANS, AND END, OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

[Preached before the GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER, at Armagh,
in June, 1823.]

I CORINTHIANS, ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

From the accounts which have come down to us of the labours and travels of the first teachers of Christianity, it may be collected that the Apostle Paul had resided at Corinth, one of the principal cities of Greece, nearly two years; and that

his ministry, as an ambassador of Christ, had there met with considerable acceptance and success.

The city of Corinth was, at the time, a place of extensive commerce, and of great wealth; and its inhabitants accordingly, taken in general, were immersed deeply in luxury and vice:—yet the Apostle succeeded, notwithstanding these unpromising circumstances, in there erecting a Christian church. That church, we may presume, was well and faithfully instructed in the principles and rules of Christianity during his residence among them. But he had not long removed, to pursue his labours elsewhere, when a flood of evils burst in upon them; and some of the grossest disorders were introduced—partly through the misplaced zeal of some who were friendly to the Christian cause; partly through the influence of some false teachers, who, to forward their own views, fostered the spirit of controversy and division; and partly, no doubt, from the remaining leaven of their old sentiments, which had not perhaps been completely brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

This last mentioned cause produced, doubtless, its full effect among the Corinthians. In common with most of their nation, they had been much employed in “seeking after wisdom;” they were great admirers of “science, falsely so called;” and strenuously attached to one or other of the several systems of philosophy, which were

taught throughout the whole of Greece with the greatest art, and enforced by the most captivating eloquence.

Thus it happened, that, among the evils which had so soon crept into the Corinthian church, the pride of learning had tempted some of them to dispute the plain doctrine of the gospel, and to despise the simple manners, the artless, unadorned language, of those who stood up as its advocates. This affectation of science is accordingly one of the first errors which the Apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, sets himself to discountenance and correct. He begins by informing them, that “Christ had sent him to preach the gospel—not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” He tells them that the cross of Christ was the instrument wherein God had chosen to display his power and wisdom; and by which he designed to eclipse, to baffle, and confound, the combined learning, and eloquence, and philosophy of the world. He reminds them of Isaiah’s prediction to this effect—“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the

Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

In pursuance of the same design, the Apostle, in the passage before us, distinctly reminds the Corinthians, how, during his residence and ministry among them, he had purposely declined all display of human learning and eloquence, and confined himself exclusively to the great object of his apostolic mission : "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not addressed to you in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power ; to the end that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Although the Christian priesthood, in this age, and in this land, be placed in circumstances different, in many respects, from those by which the first ministers of Christianity were surrounded ; yet, our commission being in substance the same with that of the Apostles, we undoubtedly have in their maxims the best general rules for

our direction ; and in their conduct the safest general models for our imitation.

Invested by you with the office of a teacher of the brethren ; called to the task of instructing, for the time, those whose business it is to instruct others ; I have made choice of this passage, as calculated to convey to my esteemed fathers and brethren in the ministry, and to impress upon my own heart, some invaluable lessons in reference to the duty of our office as ministers of the gospel of Christ ; and I trust the consideration of the subject shall not be found altogether barren of instruction to such of our lay brethren as have met with us on this occasion.

The first important hint which the reading of this passage supplies, is the earnest and confirmed resolution with which the Apostle Paul devoted himself exclusively to the duty of his office : he “ *determined* to know nothing,” to concern himself with nothing, more than the proper work of his ministry.

In this wise determination he has set an example which ought to be closely and carefully followed by every minister of the gospel. Experience sufficiently testifies the value of an undivided and zealous attention to any legitimate pursuit ; and we rarely see that man attain excellence or distinction in his profession, whatever be the object of it, who does not uniformly give it all the ardour, and all the exertion, which it

calls for. But, among the pursuits and professions of mortal men, highly valuable as many of them are, there is not one that, in the estimation of a reflecting mind, can, in point of importance, bear a moment's comparison with that which belongs to the minister of Christianity. He has taken upon him the task of "declaring unto men the testimony of God." He is invested with the high character of an ambassador of Christ, and should feel the indispensable and paramount obligation of giving himself up to his embassy, and of using his utmost endeavours to fulfil his important commission. Indeed he who seriously considers the weighty trust reposed in him as a minister of the New Testament, he who habitually regards himself as called by Providence to beseech fallen, sinful men, "in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God," will not readily suffer any minor interest or pursuit to mar his prime object, or interfere with the sacred vocation with which he is called.

There is an aim—there is a purpose—there is a character peculiar to our profession, which we should never lose sight of,—which we should never suffer society around us to forget, which ought indeed to be broadly marked upon every part of our conduct. It would be wrong, doubtless, to affect any unnecessary singularity of deportment, or any such avoidance of ordinary society, as might savour of monastic seclusion, or spiritual pride. Such conduct seems totally

at variance with the nature of our vocation. Designed as we are to be the "salt of the earth," it is decidedly our duty to mix up with society, and to take such a share in the passing affairs and intercourse of the world, as is clearly compatible with the sacred office we have assumed. By this moderate intercourse with mankind around us, (if we do not forget our proper aim and character, and so neglect our opportunities,) we may very materially increase our influence and our usefulness; we shall thus meet with various unexpected openings to improvement,—we shall find many occasions of contributing to the best interests, even of those to whom we have no other access, and who habitually keep themselves out of the reach of more formal and stated instruction.

Experience may satisfy us, however, that there are dangers incident to the clerical character from a free intercourse with society; and especially in a church whose ministers have rarely been accused of any undue seclusion from the world. Intimately connected as we are, and as we should be, with the people of our respective charges, and possessing as we do, and as we ought, a perfect community of sentiment and interest with them, nothing but prudence and a just regard to the ministerial character, and a strong sense of duty, and the grace of God, can prevent our being occasionally drawn, more than our peculiar situation will properly admit of, into a dangerous vortex—the giddy round of concerns

which terminate in time. Thus we may have known ministers of the gospel, and men of the most amiable dispositions, become, step by step, so engaged with the merely temporal concerns of their people,—so intent, perhaps, on the melioration of society, by the improvement of arts, or of agriculture, or so warmly interested in the passing party politics of the day, local or general,—in a word, so deeply embarked in secular affairs of one sort or other, as to sink the peculiarity of their professional character, and lose the minister in the man.

Let me not be understood to say, that a minister of the gospel may not give a moderate attention to any of those objects which have been mentioned. They are all matters of subordinate importance, in which, therefore, ministers must feel an interest in common with other men. And ours certainly is not the church whose ministers are subjected to any undue restraints, or obliged to stifle their sentiments, or check their legitimate exertions on any subject. But let such objects and pursuits be attended to only in their just subordination, and never suffered to thwart or interfere with that which is the great aim and object of the Christian ministry,—the promoting of the spiritual improvement of men, and restoring them to the love and service of a merciful God.

Nor let it be supposed by any that we would limit the labours of the gospel minister to the mere routine of preparing for the pulpit, and performing the stated and ordinary duties of the

pastoral office. These, it is true, if they meet with that attention which they demand, cannot but occupy a considerable portion of his time and of his pains. But, so far as he may have leisure from his paramount vocation, he may very properly attend (and the increased and still increasing knowledge of the times indispensably requires that he shall attend,) to the cultivation of his own mind in the pursuits of general literature. And it may be reckoned as not only compatible with his duty, but as forming a component part of it, that he dedicate a due portion of his time, and means, and exertions, to the charitable institutions around him, whether they have respect to the personal comfort, or to the moral and intellectual improvement, of the poor. The history and the writings of St. Paul show him to have been a man of eminent learning, fit to reason with the philosophy, and to confound the sophistry of the times; and who, amidst his higher avocations, seems to have taken a deep interest in the management of the public charities. Yet he would not suffer any minor interests to thwart him in the pursuit of his main object—the publication of the gospel—the declaring to fallen man the gracious counsel of God. “For I determined to know nothing among you,” to busy myself about nothing, but the proper duty of my office.

In the second place, we may observe, that in

the passage before us the Apostle distinctly points out the prominent feature of Christianity—the corner-stone of the gospel dispensation; and settles accordingly, with precision, what ought to be the scope and substance of our preaching and ministry—“Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

As the Son of God assumed our nature, and appeared in the character of a Mediator between God and his sinful creatures; as he was sent of the Father to teach us the knowledge of salvation; to prescribe to his followers the rule of life; to set an example of perfect obedience to that rule; and, in the end, to “suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring sinners to God;” so, the distinct exhibition of his mediatorial office and atonement, ought to be the habitual aim, as it is in truth the principal and proper duty of every minister of the gospel. It is far from being enough, nor was it the practice of the primitive teachers of Christianity, to merely allude to this main fundamental truth occasionally, generally, or at a distance. They made it, as they ought, and all who copy after their model ever will make it, the key of their instructions, the chief burden of their ministry.

Yet, let me not be mistaken, as though I meant to countenance the practice of those ministers of the gospel, who dwell almost exclusively on the sufferings and the death of the Redeemer, as if an implicit reliance on the sacrifice of Christ

were all that is required of Christians ; the effect of which is, (so far as their influence extends,) to cause it to be regarded as not merely an unnecessary, but an impious employment, to inculcate the rules of Christian living which we find in the gospel.

The principal error in the ministry of many, seems indeed to consist in limiting the range of their instructions, and grounding their system exclusively on some one principle. Thus it may be noticed, that while some forget to teach the distinctive truths of Christianity, others neglect to recommend and enforce its indispensable duties. While some would seem to make morality independent on Christian faith, others appear to regard faith as a substitute for Christian morality. And whilst one, perpetually insisting on the practice of virtue, overlooks the foundation of hope which is laid in the gospel—another, undervaluing the precepts of virtue, recommends an implicit reliance on the sacrifice of Christ. After all, I am persuaded that there is not, and that there cannot be, so much real as apparent difference in the sentiments of those whose ministry may be thus characterized, or of the people who are respectively attached to them. Still, it must be observed, that neither seem to copy after the apostolic model, or to declare the “whole counsel of God.” When we look into the New Testament, and consult the preaching of Christ and his Apostles, we cannot but observe that Chris-

tian principles and Christian practice, Christian faith and Christian works, are there uniformly made to go hand in hand ; and, sure, what the wisdom of God hath joined together, the folly of man should not presume to put asunder? It is our business, undoubtedly, to teach the doctrine of faith ; but it ought to be that faith only which “worketh by love,” which “purifieth the heart,” and “overcometh the world.” And it is equally our business to enforce the prescriptions of morality ; but it ought to be that morality only which is taught in the gospel—which springs from a heart purified by the faith, and sanctified by the grace of the gospel ; a morality which can flow only from those pure and powerful principles, “loving him who first loved us,” and “loving our neighbour as ourselves.”

The range of Christian instruction is wide and extensive ; but let us take care that we do not lose ourselves in this ample field. Let us not so wander into any adjoining territory, as to lose sight of the great and distinguishing land mark of Christianity—the mediation of the Son of God. The circle of revealed truth is of sufficient diameter ; but the cross of Christ is the pivot about which it should revolve—the centre, from which all the radii should diverge, or in which they should terminate.

Thus, whatever the holy scriptures have revealed of the origin and accountableness of man ; of his apostacy, guilt and condemnation ; of the

infinite purity of the divine nature, and the unchangeable obligation of the divine law; of the weakness and deceitfulness of men's hearts, and the abounding wickedness of their lives;—all these, and such as these points, ought to be frequently and plainly insisted on by the Christian preacher, as directly tending to the production of humility, repentance, and reformation, and preparing the way for the thankful and cordial reception of the doctrine of Christ crucified. And thus the various scriptural instructions and admonitions which are necessary to the cultivation of the Christian spirit, and the regulation of the Christian conduct—all that relates to the immutable force of the moral law, and the necessity of an unreserved obedience to its precepts—the winning and powerful influence which a sense of redeeming love should have on the human affections; and the intimate connexion of the disclosures and motives of the gospel, with a practical and willing subjection to its precepts;—all that regards the dangers, the trials, the temptations, of the Christian life;—all that belongs to the duties of diligence, and vigilance, and prayer—of meekness, and temperance, and charity;—every thing of this kind falls fairly within the range of the Christian preacher's duty, and should be regarded as inseparably connected, and accordingly taught in connexion, with the mediation of the Son of God. In a word,

all the doctrines of scripture are “given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for instruction in righteousness;”—but the doctrine of Christ crucified is plainly the leading doctrine of the gospel. Other doctrines of religion are valuable only by their connexion with and dependence upon this. Other truths may be, and are, of vital importance, as introductory to it, or consequent upon it. But to exhibit the Son of God as voluntarily submitting to degradation and death, for the redemption of fallen man, is, beyond peradventure, the main design of the Christian scriptures; and ought, therefore, to form the basis and the substance of all our ministrations. Thus should we follow the footsteps of the Apostle, who resolved to limit his exertions to the diffusion of the leading principles of Christianity—the doctrine of Christ crucified, together with the truths and duties essentially connected with it. Whoever heard him preach would have supposed that he knew, that he attended to, nothing else. For whatever other knowledge he possessed, (and he was a man of acknowledged learning,) this was the only species of knowledge which he chose to discover in the character of an Apostle, or showed himself concerned to promulgate among Christians. Modelling our conduct upon his, we shall “not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;” we shall not suffer ourselves to “glory, save in the cross of

Christ;" we shall determine to "know nothing among our people, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

In the third place, we are led to notice, as worthy of our imitation, the humility, the plainness, the simplicity of the Apostle's language and manners, in fulfilling the duty of his office. "And I, brethren," said he to the Corinthians, "when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling: and my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in plain evidence of the Spirit and of power."

There is not a character among men which more imperatively calls for plainness, and candour, and sincerity, than that of the Christian pastor. Having taken the awful responsibility of instructing his charge as the accountable creatures of God, and soliciting their attention to those things which belong to their eternal peace; he cannot but know the weighty obligation which rests upon him to bring the doctrines and duties of Christianity plainly and palpably before their minds; and if he be (what he ought to be) deeply impressed with the paramount importance of these things himself, he will feel and discover a proportionate anxiety to communicate the same valuable sentiments and impressions to those

around him. Like the Apostle, he will be duly sensible of his own weakness and insufficiency for these things; he will experience somewhat of the same fear and trembling, lest he should fail of accomplishing his purpose; and therefore he will habitually use great plainness of speech. Addressing himself to sinful, perishing men, on the great doctrines of salvation, and the duties arising out of them, he cannot permit himself to affect the fine orator, or the learned philosopher. He will not set himself to amuse the fancy, or captivate the ear, with a fine flow of well turned periods, or a succession of images, however dazzling:—this can be regarded as nothing better than trifling with the most important concerns—solemn trifling with the time, with the eternity of his hearers. No! on such subjects he will speak, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” He will preach “the truth as it is in Jesus,” in its native unadulterated form. Without any of the prunings, or trimmings, or glossings, of human ingenuity, he will be careful to deliver the doctrines and rules of Christianity as they are laid down in the gospel. He will minister the “sincere milk of the word,” and leave it to the Spirit of God to convey it with efficacy to the mind, and cause it to produce its genuine effects—an humble prostration before the power, and the purity, and the mercy of God, and a gradually invigorated growth in holiness and grace. Thus will he,

by the habitual use of the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," be made instrumental in securing conquests, which never were, nor can be, gained by all the arts of human learning, or by the most exquisite skill in the choice and arrangement of language; and to which, in truth, nothing can lead the way but a distinct perception, and a strong sense of the value of salvation, produced, both in the preacher and the hearer, by the power of the Spirit of God. These were the weapons, from the divine armoury, which the Apostle Paul wielded in his warfare with the powers of darkness; and we know the blessed results.

Far be it from me, however, either in precept or in practice, to underrate the helps of human learning, or to despise the legitimate rules of method in the arrangement and composition of our discourses from the pulpit. They only merit contempt, mingled with pity, who can do so. We should endeavour, in the style and delivery of our sermons, to keep pace with the growing taste and improvement of the age in which we live; nor can this, as a subordinate object, be reckoned by the well-informed as unworthy of our attention. The royal preacher tells us that he "sought to find out acceptable words." The enemies of Christ were disarmed, when they heard him speak "as never man spake." Apollos is celebrated even in the page of sacred history as an "eloquent man." And the Apostle

Paul himself, though he disclaimed "the words of man's wisdom," the vain philosophy, and artful sophistry of the Grecian schools, was, notwithstanding, an orator of no mean rank. Whoever reads his sermons, or his letters, will be made to feel all the ingenuity and all the force of a legitimate eloquence—an eloquence which so struck the men of Lystra, that they were scarcely prevented from offering him sacrifice as the god Mercury, "because he was the chief speaker."

Christian truth and Christian duty are venerable objects; and it is the duty of those who are appointed to recommend them to take care that they be neither degraded by a mean, unworthy garb, nor tricked out in the fanciful drapery of affectation, nor overlaid with the glare of a tinsel ornament. Let them but be presented in their native plainness, simplicity, and beauty, and they cannot fail to captivate every heart that is not either brutalized by vice, or darkened by infidelity. For it is not by "the enticing words of man's wisdom," but by plainly exhibiting the simple truths and motives of Christianity, that men are called back to duty and to God. Mere ethical harangues, or recondite disquisitions of any kind—cold and general statements, or the utmost display of human learning, couched in the most refined language, and delivered with all the arts of a studied eloquence—never yet subdued, nor ever will subdue, the heart of

one rebellious and stubborn offender. It is the doctrine of the cross of Christ which God has ordained to effect this inestimable purpose. It is only by a crucified Redeemer held up before the eyes of perishing sinners, that they can look and live. "Allowed, then, as we are, to be put in trust with the gospel, let us so speak," in plainness, simplicity, and godly sincerity, "not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." "Seeing we have this ministry committed to us, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God."

Still farther, the Apostle, in conclusion, discovers the end which he proposed to himself in the execution of his office, and which ought to be the leading aim of every Christian minister, namely, "that the faith of his hearers should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Aiming, as we ought, at the accomplishment of this valuable end, we shall leave little room for any inferior motives to operate on our minds. Impressed with a just sense of the unspeakable importance of Christianity, and of our office as ministers of Christianity—inspired with an honest and ardent concern to ground the faith and practice of our people on

the foundation of the word of God, and to persuade them cordially to lay hold on his mercy, and conform closely to his rules ;—such an aim must at once effectually banish all unworthy considerations from our hearts ; all silly affectation of language, or of manner, in our public performances ; all aimings at human applause, or the advancement of mere worldly interests of any kind. If we are ever observed to be actuated by low or sinister motives, (and there is no concealing them where they exist,) they will greatly weaken the force of the most powerful appeals from the pulpit ; they will go, in a great measure, to defeat the very end of our ministry. We ought to be able, and it seems essential to the due performance of our clerical duties that we be able, to address ourselves in sincerity to those around us, as Paul did to the Corinthians, “ We seek not yours, but you.” We have given ourselves to the work of the ministry among you, and our heart’s desire and prayer is, that we may be made instrumental in settling your faith on the only sure foundation, in promoting your best interests, in securing your eternal salvation. Keeping these ends steadily in view, brethren, we will be cautious of going beyond the teaching of scripture ; we shall beware of entertaining mankind with philosophical inquiries, or barren speculations, on dark and mysterious points. But we shall study constantly to teach the doctrines, and recommend the rules

of Christ, in that beautiful simplicity, and with that divine sincerity and affection, which characterized the ministrations of the first preachers of Christianity. Setting aside all those schemes of human ingenuity and device, of which they knew nothing, it ought to be our earnest and unceasing study, as it was theirs, to feed the flock of Christ with the unadulterated doctrine of scripture, and to lead them to the pure fountain of truth and knowledge, to the end "that their faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

And here we may be permitted to observe, that, as ministers of the gospel, we enjoy in this, as in other respects, the fullest and most uncontrolled liberty in the discharge of our pastoral duties. We are one of the few ecclesiastical bodies, who are satisfied with the standard of the Christian scriptures. And we and our people ought to rejoice in it, that Christianity is, among us, undegraded by human tests, unshackled by human authority. Our church stands upon the broad, safe, and consistently Protestant grounds, of the sufficiency of scripture, and the right of private judgment;—and so long as we hold these inestimable principles sacred and inviolate, so long shall we "stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and never permit ourselves to be entangled with the yoke of bondage." Let other churches, if they please, add to the doctrines, and laws, and institutions of

Christianity ;—let them pronounce their authoritative interpretations of scripture, and thunder forth their anathemas upon all who cannot swallow their prescriptions whole and entire; and let them go on to reproach us, as they have done, with the want of an acknowledged human standard of faith ;—but, convinced by history and experience, that all attempts at uniformity, by human standards, have not only failed of success, but been the sources of endless and rancorous divisions among the followers of Christ, let us be content with the universally acknowledged standard of the word of God. And whilst we can lay our hand upon the New Testament, and say, “ Here is the rule of our Christian principles—here is the charter of our Christian rights,” we stand upon the only solid and tenable ground. This is the rock on which the church of Christ should be built; and so long as, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we hold immoveably by this rock, so long shall our faith, and the faith of the people in communion with us, stand, where it ought to stand, “ not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Thus far, my fathers and brethren, have I humbly presumed, in your presence, to deduce from the apostolic example in the text, a few general rules for the guidance of our ministerial conduct, with which it may be of the utmost importance to ourselves, and our respective charges,

that our minds should be deeply impressed. I did not expect to advance any thing new or unknown to any of you, on a subject so worn. But worn though it be, it seems not unfitting that those whose office it is to remind others of their duties, should be occasionally reminded of their own. Will you give me leave, in conclusion, to suggest two or three considerations, which should move us all through the grace of God, to pursue the line of conduct so distinctly marked out by the Apostle in the text.

By carefully copying after the apostolic model, we shall contribute, in our several spheres, to extend the influence of genuine Christianity, and to sustain the character of the church to which we belong. In reference to both these objects, there is more depending on the personal character and deportment of the ministers of religion, than is generally thought. The work of the Lord cannot be expected to prosper in the hands of an immoral or a careless minister. He may deliver the truths which the Apostle Paul taught—he may preach with the tongue of an angel; but as it is not in the nature of things that his people should believe him in earnest, so he must be to them no better than a “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Nay, it is certain, that such an example in a minister of the gospel must materially weaken the virtuous principles of many around him; and contribute, so far as the influence of it is felt, to bring religion itself into disre-

pute. But it is by an earnest and zealous attention to our pastoral duties;—by addressing ourselves exclusively to the work of the ministry;—by preaching the doctrine of Christ crucified, according to the plainness and simplicity of the gospel; and by upholding the purity and integrity of our personal deportment; that we may hope, through divine grace, to recommend Christianity with some effect, and to diffuse its blessed influence over human society, within the sphere to which our agency may extend. And besides, it ought to be recollected by us all, that these are the only means by which the character of *our* church may be upheld, and that we have nothing to recommend us, beyond the strict and exemplary discharge of our duty. In other churches, the pomp and circumstance of splendid rituals, together with the temporal wealth, and power, and dignity, of the superior orders of their clergy, may in some measure retain an influence and a respect in society, even after a great degree of carelessness and corruption of manners may have crept into the priesthood. But the ministers of such a church as ours, without dignities, without wealth, without power of any kind, temporal or spiritual, can uphold the respectability of our character, and retain the love and esteem of an informed people, only by our virtues, by our abilities, and by the uniform zeal and diligence, with which we perform the duties of the pastoral office. We can “approve our-

selves as the ministers of Christ, only by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left."

But whilst the upholding of the character of our church may be fairly urged as a legitimate motive to ministerial diligence and zeal, it should never be forgotten, that there are much higher interests to be taken care of, than the mere maintaining of the reputation of any church whatever—namely, the securing to ourselves the approbation of God, and promoting, to the utmost of our power, the improvement and salvation of those committed to our charge. These ends are, thank God, happily attainable by the very same means. Our own individual prospects for eternity, like those of others, are made to depend, under the grace of God, on the sincere and faithful discharge of our duties, whether those duties have an immediate reference to ourselves or others. Let nothing mislead us into the supposition, (a piece of deception which we are sometimes in danger of practising on ourselves,) that any measure of attention to public and official duties, can compensate the want of personal Christianity. Our own immortal interests are at stake; and the Apostle, whose public conduct we have been contemplating as a model for our

ministrations, tells us how scrupulously cautious he was at the same time in his private, personal, individual deportment, “lest, by any means, after he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.” Bound by these considerations, as we are, to secure, by all means, our own eternal interests, we are constantly to bear in mind, that the eternal interests of others also are in some measure put into our hands; that “to us is committed the ministry of reconciliation;” that we are “set as watchmen unto the house of Israel.” In this capacity it ought to be our most anxious study and endeavour, to “keep back nothing that may be profitable;” nor “shun to declare the whole counsel of God,” so far as we know it; remembering the awful responsibility of our office, the incalculable worth of immortal souls, and the solemn account we must one day render of our stewardship. God grant that these considerations may lead us all to be faithful to the important trust committed to us, and to “fulfil the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus, by testifying the gospel of the grace of God;—warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.”

Fathers and Brethren—the life and the ministry of each of us are hastening to a close. “The Lord Jesus Christ is showing us all, that we must shortly put off these tabernacles.” In the removal from among us, since our last annual meeting,

of some of the most worthy and promising members of our body, we have had so many awakening memorials of the instability of our own state. Let us be thereby quickened to diligence and activity in our pastoral office. Let us be zealous in preaching the word, and in performing the work of our master, while time, and opportunity, and talents, are allowed us. Let us “meditate on these things, and give ourselves wholly to them; that our profiting may appear unto all.”—Let us “take heed equally to ourselves, and to the ministry” of the gospel. Let us continue to attend to them so long as we live, “for in so doing, we shall both save ourselves, and them that hear us.” Thus shall each of us, at the close of his ministry, be able to appeal to his particular charge, in the Apostle’s language to the Corinthians—“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.” And thus may we look forward, in good hope, to that blessed period, when we, and those of our several charges whom we may have been instrumental in reconciling unto God, through a crucified Saviour, shall be added “to the general

assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven ;—to the spirits of just men made perfect ;—to an innumerable company of angels ;—to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament ; and to God the Judge of all.”—
Amen.

WHILE the preceding discourses were in progress of delivery, a few members of the congregation, amounting to about twenty-five, (marshalled by a military officer then quartered in Newry,) withdrew, for the purpose of forming a congregation, intended to be exclusively Trinitarian. To them the following friendly letter was addressed by the Session, in the hope of preventing a schism.

The Minister and Elders of the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry, to such of their brethren as are disposed to secede from them.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE desire, with the sincerity and affection of your fellow Christians, to convey to you the sentiments we entertain on the subject of that difference which unhappily threatens to divide us. We deeply lament that any cause should have arisen to disturb that comfortable communion and fellowship which have ever hitherto subsisted among us. We sincerely respect the rights of conscience, and the exercise of private judgment among Christians ; and we cannot but think that, as we all appeal to the same unerring rule, the holy scriptures, and are fully agreed in looking for salvation to the free grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the Saviour and Judge of the world, any difference which

exists among us should not go to break up that brotherhood of Christian affection, and that dearest tie of Christian communion, which have hitherto, under God's blessing, ministered so much to our mutual edification and comfort.

We seek no control over the principles of your faith; on the contrary, we wish you all to judge for yourselves, and to be guided by your own conscientious convictions, but we profess to you, dear brethren, that it is our most anxious wish to maintain with you the sacred fellowship of the Gospel; "forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace;" and we do most earnestly entreat it of you, without any compromise of your principles, to meet us on the same ground, and in the same spirit, and thereby to prevent an unhappy division in our hitherto happy congregation.

As our minister has announced his intention of preaching, on the next Lord's day, the discourse which he delivered in the year 1823, before the reverend the General Synod of Ulster, and which chiefly led to the connexion since subsisting between him and us, we anxiously hope that there may be a full attendance of the congregation on that day; and that the heads of families may remain after divine service, for a friendly conference on the subject of this address.

But if, after all, it must be that the finest and best ties by which men can be bound together are to be rent asunder, we entreat you not to be hurried into any measures that might have even the appearance of rashness or precipitation. If we must part, let us part as friends and brethren in Christ Jesus.

That the Spirit of God may, at this juncture, direct you and us to such measures as may best serve to promote his glory, and the peace and interests of the church, is the humble and fervent prayer of

Yours, in the fellowship of the gospel,

(Signed, by order,)

ISAAC WILLIAM GLENNY,
SESSION CLERK.

Vestry-room, Newry,
19th February, 1828.

The Session's letter was returned without any reply, merely enclosed in the following note, from the individual who undertook to present it to his brethren :—

Ellenvale, 27th February, 1828.

DEAR SIR,

AGREEABLE to my promise, I read the enclosed friendly address to the meeting, on Monday last, the prayer of which was unanimously refused to be complied with.

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

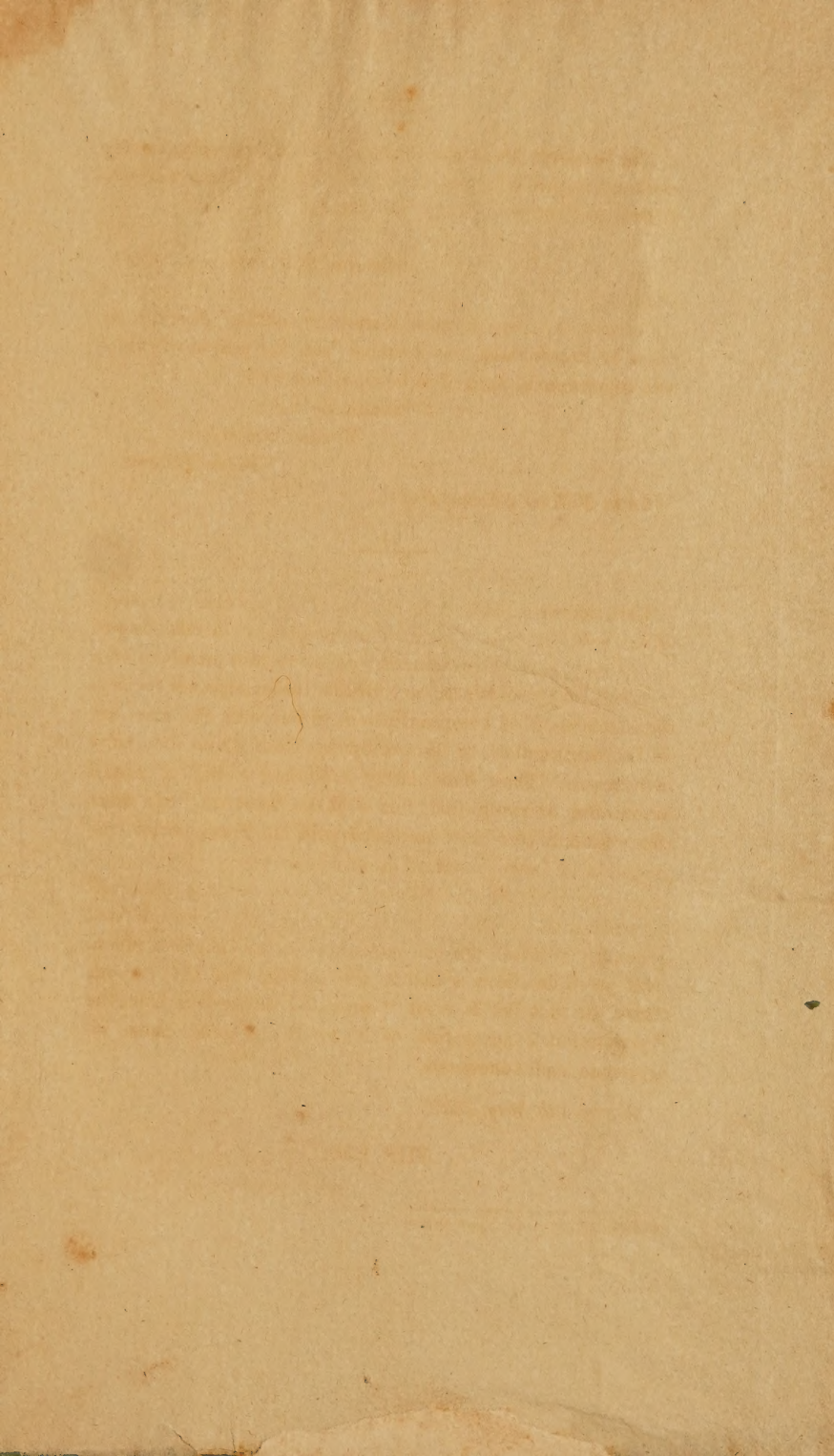
DAVID HENING.

Isaac William Glenny, Esq.

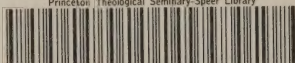
This affords a distinct indication of the temper and spirit of the seceding party. And these few people, in this state of excitement, have been snatched at by certain members of a neighbouring presbytery, and formed into a separate society, without a word of communication, either with the minister, or the congregation, or the presbytery, from whom they have withdrawn. They have lately exhibited a list of names amounting to ninety-four, but of these there are little more than one half who were connected with the Presbyterian congregation of Newry; and of those who were so, there are not more than thirty-five individuals who contributed on the smallest scale to the funds of that congregation. They are collected generally from all the congregations in the neighbourhood. And yet it has been stated to the public, that the persons named in that list have all "separated themselves from the Presbyterian congregation of Newry," A good cause requires no such statements.

Newry, 6th May, 1828.

THE END.



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